Peter Woodworth Hill

Collected Works, 1955 to 2018

second edition (2024)

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Front endpapers: *The Sarders* (detail), 1964
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Preface to the Second Edition

Since the first printing of this book we have discovered a few more works and their owners. That happy circumstance, along with us running out of books, required a second, updated printing. There are new images, a transcript of an interview, and fewer errors. And more thanks are now due.

Mary Lou Gifford and Anne Kutak—two of Bob Kutak's sisters—care for a spectacular work from 1972 that I had only known from a tiny slide. Mary Lou arranged for Kathi Mitchell of Blue Denim Photography & Design to visit and photograph it.

Peter Stevenson, who owns two of my father's Cranbrook-era paintings, graciously drove them to the studio of Detroit-area artist Eric Law for photographing. Peter is the son of my dad's friend Ian Stevenson, and he is named after my father.

On Instagram, idly clicking the hashtag #PeterHill led me to discover that a Kansas-based artist named Slater Reid Sousley owns one of my father's drawings. After Slater accepted that I wasn't working some weird scam, he put me in touch with his mother, Lynn Turner Sousley. Their family owns five of my father's works, which Slater expertly photographed. As for the Sousley family's connection to my father, please see Lynn's remembrance on page 218. Hers is the only non-student remembrance of my father in the book, and it captures something really important about my dad's character.

Marilynn Simpson, my mother's friend at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, owns the work she affectionately calls "Big Red." Marilynn let the Detroit-area photographer Marc-Gregor Pierre Campredon visit her home and capture the image.

Shortly after the book went to press the first time, I connected with Cindy Forehead. Cindy and her husband, Steve, took classes from my dad, and in 2009 they bought one of his paintings. Steve is an author, painter, and award-winning artisan of handcrafted beveled glass windows and doors.

Gerald Koziol, a Colorado-based architect, was a student of my father's from 1966 to 1971. He sent images of the works he owns.

In summer 2023, a woman named Betsy Puchner reached out to my sister Mary. Betsy had dated Bob Kutak, and he had given her two of my father's drawings. Betsy was now downsizing and offered to return the drawings to our family.

My father's materials (slides, ledgers, letters, MFA thesis, etc.) now live in the University Archives section of UNO's Criss Library. My thanks to Amy Schindler, director of Archives and Special Collections at UNO, for reaching out and making that possible.

And, thanks again to my friend Scott Hoffman at Edition One Books for shepherding this process, and to my mother, Jody Hill, for supporting it fully.

—Summer 2024

Peter Hill and sculptor Buzz Buchanan, January 1965. Robert Paskach, photographer. The Durham Museum.

Acknowledgments

A book like this requires the contributions of many people. Here they are.

Thank you to my mother, Jody Hill, for supporting this project from start to finish. Sam Achelpohl lent me his camera whenever I needed it. Jon Welles photographed works of the Freeman and Welles families in Duluth, Minnesota.

The following folks let me or a proxy invade their homes or borrow works to photograph them: Mary and Sam Achelpohl, Judy Church Blazek, Chuck and Kathy Campbell, Beverly and David Freeman, George and Christine Greene, Jack Hill, Robert Hill and Tana Siebert, Stephen and Leslie Hill, Stefanie Huff, Steve and Annette Huff, Kristin and Greg Janisch, John and Barbara Musselman, Jody Page and Margaret Jackson, Dana and Scott Porter, Colin C. Smith, Rick and Connie Spellman, Toni Turnquist, Alice and Austin Ulmer, David and Tracy Wintroub, Eddie Wintroub, and Beverly Young. My invasion of the home of Meghan Freeman and Evan Porter was literal: my son Donald and I went there at night while they were on vacation.

Many people contributed photos: Kelly Adams, Robyn and Jeremy Bash, Ron Bishop, Jim Butler, James Campbell, Chris Curry, John Derry, Lindsey Freeman, T. J. Freeman, "Little" Steve Hill, Robert Hower, Mary Jochim, Kate McCoy Jones, Chrissy Lind, Raechel Meyer, Gina Mitchell, John Page, the Parrott family (Douglas, Cyndi, Emilie George), Haven and Simmy Pell, the Rock family (Marilyn, Michael, Patrick), Janet Spring, Peter and Seba Sullivan, Deborah Vacek, Jerry Weber, and Kathlene D'Agosta Wisler. Extra thanks go to Mary Morrow of the Art and Art History Department at Albion College; she sent amazing photos of the works Albion owns.

I reached out to institutions that hold my father's art. The big fish was the Kutak Rock law firm, which cares for 101 (!) of my father's pieces. Susan Panko in the Denver office obtained photos of three works from 1980. Jeanne Salerno, who oversees Kutak's Omaha collection, allowed me, my wife, my sister Mary, and my mother into the Kutak Rock offices so we could take high-quality photos of several older works. Gratitude is too mild a word for how I feel, Jeanne.

Tour of the Kutak Rock offices in Omaha, Nebraska, February 2022.
Left to right: Jeanne Salerno, Jody Hill, Mary Hill Achelpohl, Maureen McVaney Hill.

Several other institutions hold my father's art. Extra-special thanks are due to two people. Elizabeth Andrews at the Waterloo Center for the Arts in Waterloo, Iowa, let me visit and photograph two paintings. If you're near Waterloo, go see the center: It has the largest collection of Haitian art in the world, and it is spectacular, so leave a donation. Sarah Buhr of the Springfield Art Museum in Springfield, Missouri, sent me lovely photos and expressed enormous enthusiasm for my Dad's works. Thanks are also due to Candace Berger of the Joslyn Museum of Art in Omaha, Nebraska, for putting up with my relentless pestering; Abby Scott and Dan Schwalm at HDR, the prëeminent design firm in these United States; Abby Cape of the UNO Libraries; Shaun Conroy of the Spiva Center for the Arts in Joplin, Missouri; Louise Pfotenhauer of the Neville Public Museum of Brown County in Green Bay, Wisconsin; Summer Amman of the Sioux City Art Center in Sioux City, Iowa; Grace Serra at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan; Laura MacNewman and Corey Gross of the Cranbrook Academy of Art; and that very puzzled security guard at the Teacher Administration Center ("TAC Building") in Omaha, Nebraska, who let me enter the building (under supervision, of course) and take a photo.

The following people dug through archives on my behalf: Denise Brady, Claire Du Laney, and Jeffrey Drietz of UNO; Margo Bieker of Duchesne Academy; Holly Baber of Doane University in Crete, Nebraska; James Bockelman and Jerry Pfabe of Concordia University in Seward, Nebraska; Sarah Crandall of the General Mills Corporation; Susan O'Brien of Michigan State University; Taylor Henning of Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan; Darby Kurtz of the McGoogan Health Sciences Library in Omaha, Nebraska; Rebecca Manning of the Mulvane Art Museum in Topeka, Kansas; Jennifer Riestenberg of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis; Marcus Schlicter of Wayne State College in Wayne, Nebraska; and Martha Tanner of Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Special thank-yous are owed to students and friends of my father who contributed remembrances and images of their own works: Kelly Adams, Steve Bendykowski, Ron Bishop, Jim Butler, John Derry, Robert Hower, Simmy Pell, Ward Schumaker, Colin C. Smith, Mike Tegland, Toni Turnquist, Kathlene D'Agosta Wisler, and Beverly Young. Toni Turnquist also arranged for the award-winning photographer Larry Ferguson to capture two of my father's works and one of her own. To all my father's students: I hope the book reproduces your own works to your satisfaction, even though we all know reproductions are never adequate to the originals.

I'd be remiss if I didn't thank Jim Arundel for putting me in touch with the Kutak Rock Denver office and regaling me with his stories about Bob.

Particular thanks go to Alec Paul, who photographed the works owned by the Huff, Musselman, and Spellman families. Thanks also to Colin C. Smith, who sent Alec my way.

My greatest thanks to my friend Scott Hoffman at Edition One Books in Richmond, California. As of this writing I've known Scott for almost two decades—we've worked together at a couple of companies—and I owe him more than he probably even recalls. As usual, he answered all my questions with patience and thoroughness. He's also one of the kindest guys you could know. Thank you, Scott, for helping me keep my dad's art and memory vivid and alive.

I apologize for any omissions or errors. I tried to keep correspondence organized, but organization is not my strong suit.

The real maker of this book is my father. The pain of his absence is a reminder that he was with us for a good and long time.

Overleaf: Untitled, 1956 (detail); see page 21

Introduction

A good introduction answers a couple of implicit questions: Why do you have this book? and, Why does this book matter? I'll answer the first one directly. The second question gets answered in time.

Why Do You Have This Book?

If this book belongs to you, you most likely own one or more of the works depicted in it. But who are you, and how did you come to possess that art?

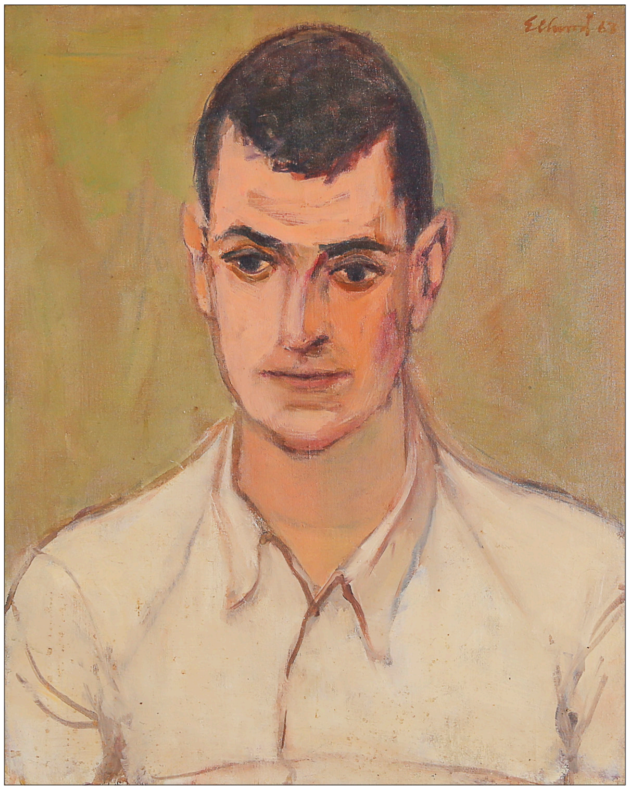
- The odds are extremely good that you're a descendant or a relative of the artist and his wife—Peter Woodworth Hill, Senior, and Joan ("Jody") Campbell Hill of Omaha, Nebraska. (Page 510 will help you figure that out, at least up to a point in time.) So, you inherited the art.
- But: If you're not a descendant or a relative, then you're a friend of the family or a descendant of that friend. You bought the art, received it as a gift, or inherited it.
- Or: There is a remote chance that you represent an institution such as a corporation or university or museum. A predecessor acquired the art, and it's now in your care. Congratulations: you are in a privileged minority.

On the off chance you own this book but not any of the art shown inside, you are most likely an artist who knew Peter Hill or a descendant of that artist.

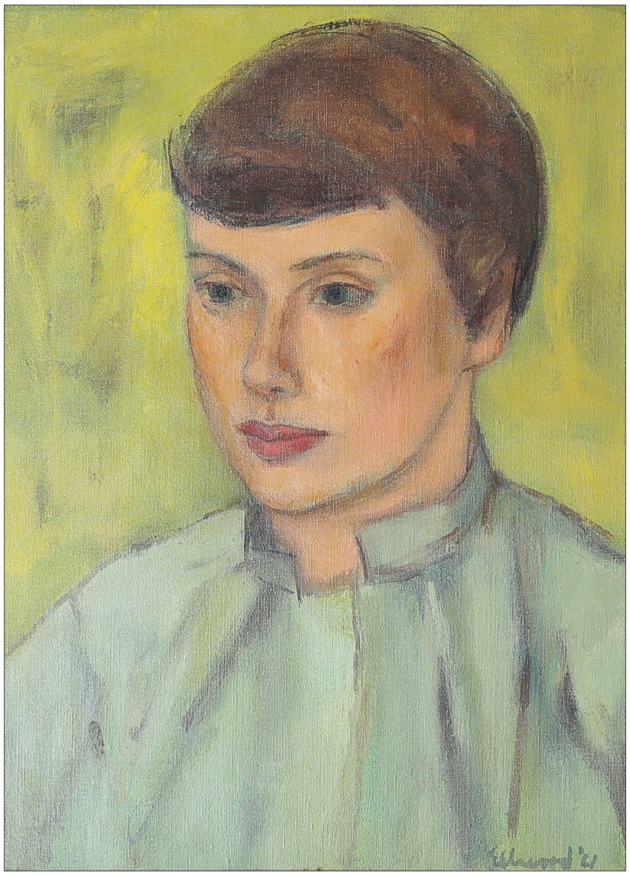
This book is being distributed in late 2022 to friends, family, and a few institutions. They're receiving this book, but honestly, it's not really for them. It's for the person cracking it open in 2082 or 2142 or even farther out, if there is such a person. I really hope there's such a person, and that, as mentioned, that person has one or more works depicted in this book.

One thing to know up front. The book's a gift, but for people who own the art, it also has a price: a job to do. If you're not willing to do that job, I'd ask that you give the book and the art you own to someone who will. As for what that job is, I'll get to that later.

Depending on how far past 2022 you are, you might need some biographical context. Peter Hill wrote his memoirs—see pages 476 to 509—but here's the gist.



Kenneth Ellwood. *Portrait of Peter Hill*, 1963. Oil on canvas. Collection of Meghan Freeman and Evan Porter.



Kenneth Ellwood. *Portrait of Joan C. Hill*, 1961. Oil on canvas. Collection of Joan C. Hill.

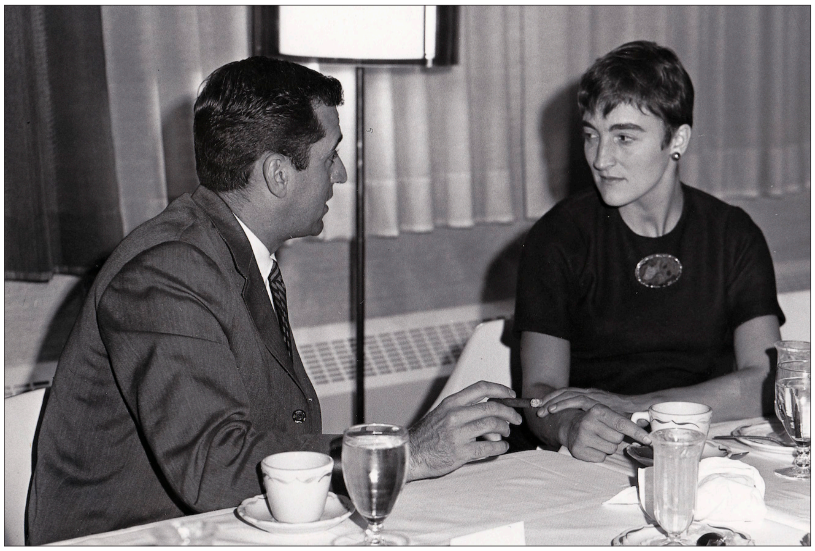
Some Biographical Context

Peter Hill was born on November 29, 1933, in Detroit, Michigan. He grew up there with two loving parents and one older brother. In 1952, he went to Albion College in Albion, Michigan, for his undergraduate education and graduated in 1956. While there he met his future wife, Jody.

From 1956 to 1958 he attended the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, earning a Master of Fine Arts degree with a focus on oil painting. In summer 1958, Omaha University in Nebraska hired him as an assistant instructor. He moved to Omaha with Jody and began teaching studio art and art history in September 1958.

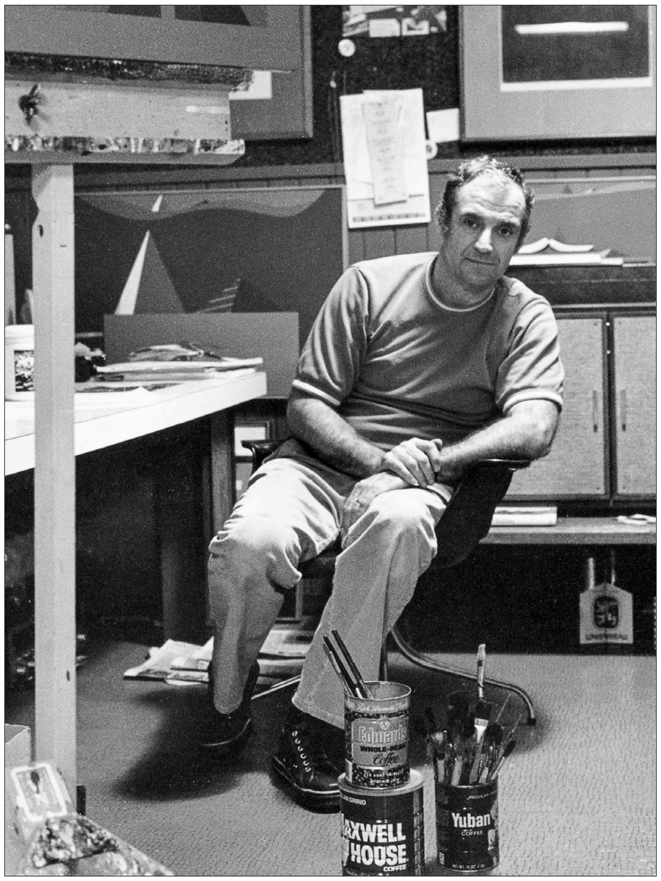
Teaching painting at Omaha University, early 1960s

He taught for forty-two years at what would become the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Those decades brought tenure, one-person shows, gallery representation, year upon year of student exhibitions—all the usual 20th-century professor–artist stuff.



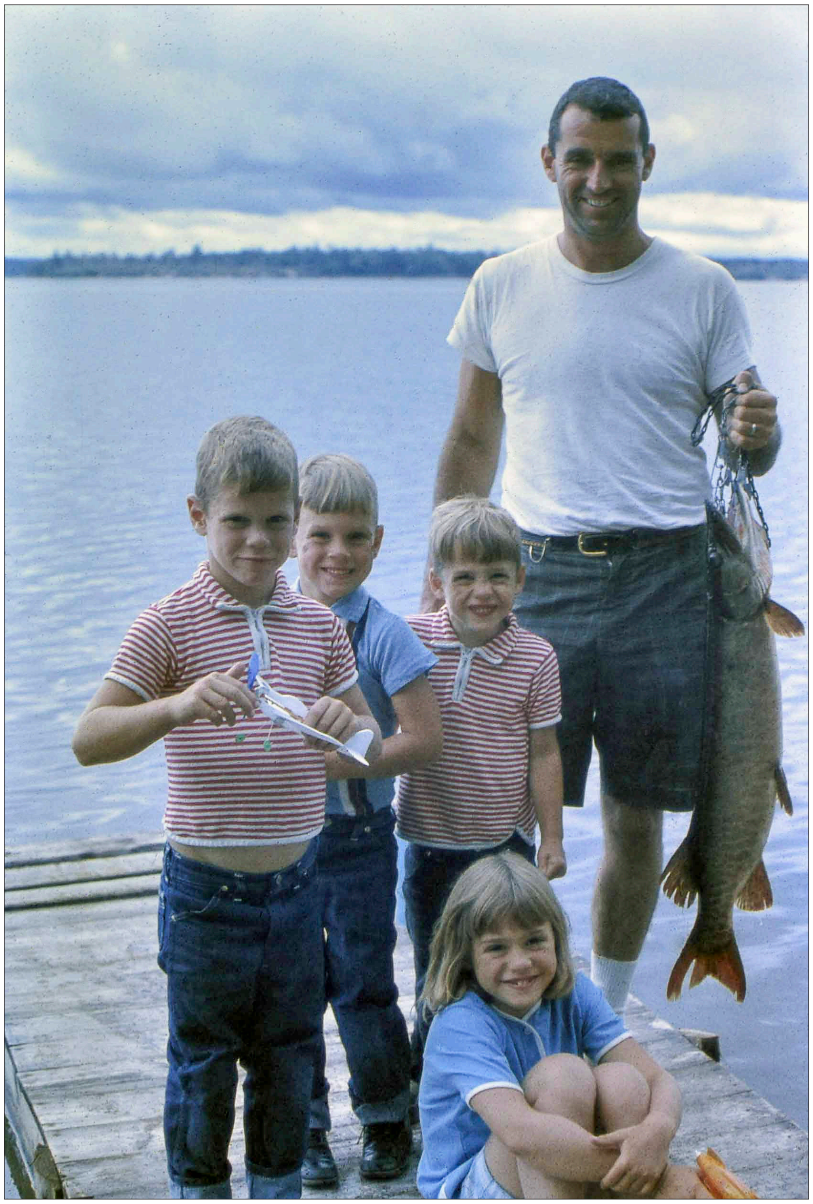
At a banquet in November 1967 with influential art critic and theorist Lucy Lippard

He and Jody would raise six children and two dogs. In fall, winter, and spring, a gendered division of labor was fairly clear: Jody cared for the children and produced a home; he cared for his students and produced art. He was always attentive to his wife and children, but the school year was for work.



In his studio basement, late 1970s

During the summer the entire family traveled to Canada—specifically, Vermilion Bay in the province of Ontario—where the division of labor softened, a lot. He spent many hours with his wife and kids fishing in boats, picking berries, and swimming in Edward Lake. The only things he painted in the summer were the cabin and the deck. In fall, winter, and spring, he was a whole lot of Father with sparks of Dad. In summer, he was almost entirely Dad.



With his children Jim, Pete, Steve, and Lindsey on Edward Lake in Ontario, Canada; late 1960s.

During the school year he worked long hours teaching and painting and didn't like distractions. But most of the time he was cheerful and optimistic and a loving and devoted husband.

Peter and Jody Hill, April 1973

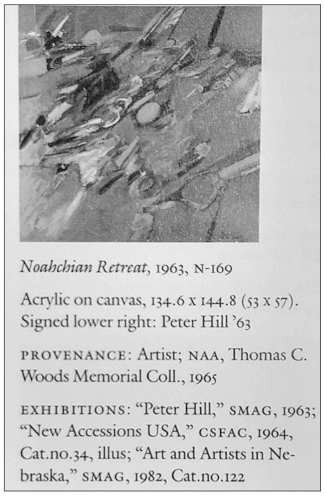
He liked beer and gin and tonic, but I never saw him drunk (that I know). He smoked a pipe until his early 40s, and he enjoyed cigars in his boat in Canada.

"Pierre of the North," August 21, 2018.
Photograph by Jon Welles.

When he retired in 2000, he kept doing all the things just described except for the teaching. He kept on painting, painting, painting. He died on April 20, 2020, leaving behind his wife, five surviving children, many grandchildren, and several great-grandchildren.

Peter Hill was my father. By all accounts—some of which this book includes—he was an excellent professor, inspiring his students to work hard and work well. By my own reckoning he was a skilled and principled artist. Our family estimates he made between 1,200 and 1,500 works in his 60-year career.

But he's not famous. His works fetch middling prices. Family, friends, and one law firm own most of his works. Only two art-related books that I can find mention him: *Prize-Winning Paintings, Book 7* (1967) and *The American Painting Collection of the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery* (1988; see right). In maybe fifty years he'll be a cipher, even to his descendants.



Noahchian Retreat, 1963, N-169

Acrylic on canvas, 134.6 x 144.8 (53 x 57). Signed lower right: Peter Hill '63

PROVENANCE: Artist; NAA, Thomas C. Woods Memorial Coll., 1965

EXHIBITIONS: "Peter Hill," SMAG, 1963; "New Accessions USA," CSFAC, 1964, Cat.no.34, illus; "Art and Artists in Nebraska," SMAG, 1982, Cat.no.122

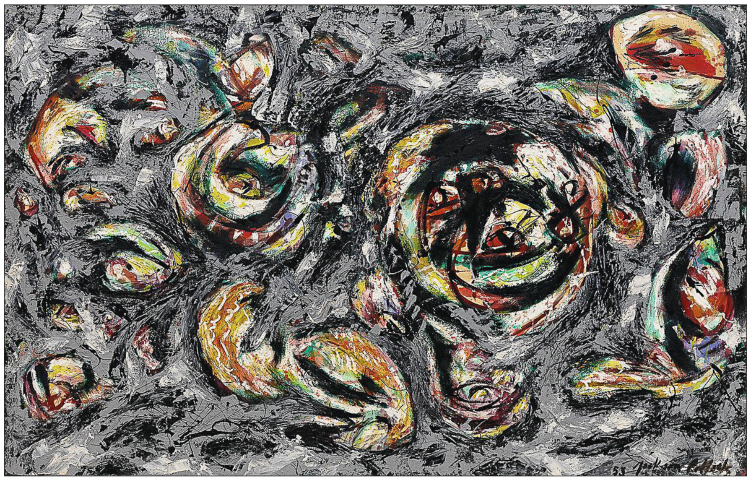
That's why one of his children is writing this book, and laying out the text, and gathering and taking many of the photographs in it. Despite his talents as an artist, there's no profit motive in making a book on Peter Hill; this modest thing you're reading has another ambition. You'll learn about that ambition when you learn about that job I mentioned.

So let's talk about his art.

His Art

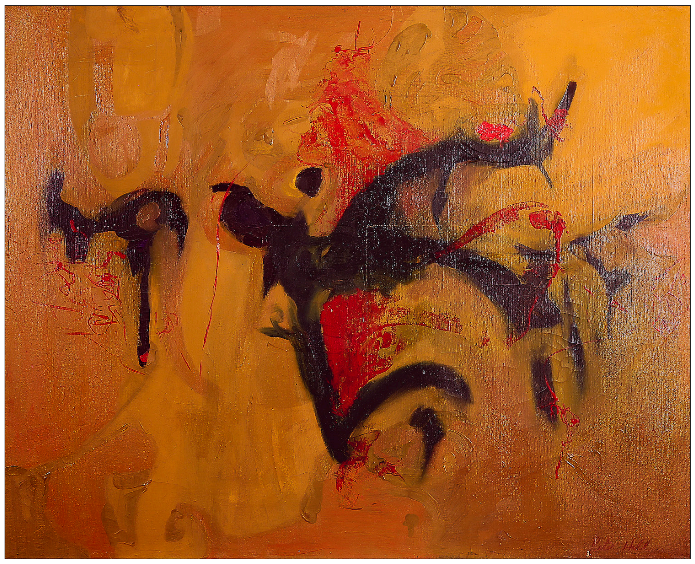
As an artist, my father was broadly what is called a Modernist. That capital "M" and the closing "-ist" tells you that Modernism is a concept that means something other than just "what is happening right around now."

Modernism was a vision of what art could and should be that fueled and structured the practice of art in the Western world from the end of the 19th century through the middle of the 20th. My father decided to become an artist around 1955, right as one form of Modernism—Abstract Expressionism—was ascendant in the United States. Jackson Pollock (1912–1956) is perhaps its most famous practitioner.



Jackson Pollock. *Ocean Greyness*, 1953.
Oil on canvas, 57.75 x 90 in.

So, it's unsurprising that my father started out as an Abstract Expressionist of sorts. It's what folks were doing and what advanced schools such as Cranbrook were teaching.



Peter Hill. Untitled, 1957–8. Oil on canvas, 34 x 42 in.

But Abstract Expressionism is just one type of Modernism. The concept encompasses many artistic movements—not just Abstract Expressionism but also Analytical Cubism, Synthetic Cubism, Fauvism, Constructivism, Suprematism, just to name a few. He explored several styles during his career, and except for a weird turn or two—quickly abandoned—he stayed a Modernist through all of them.

But if all those different movements are types of Modernism, then what does the word even mean?

I once heard a professor compare Modernism to God's home as described in John 14:2: "In My Father's house are many rooms." (Modernism could be pretentious.) If you tour Modernism's "many rooms" you'll find a lot of stuff: emotional stuff, intellectual stuff, bodily stuff, spiritual stuff, historical stuff, ahistorical stuff, mystical stuff, etc.

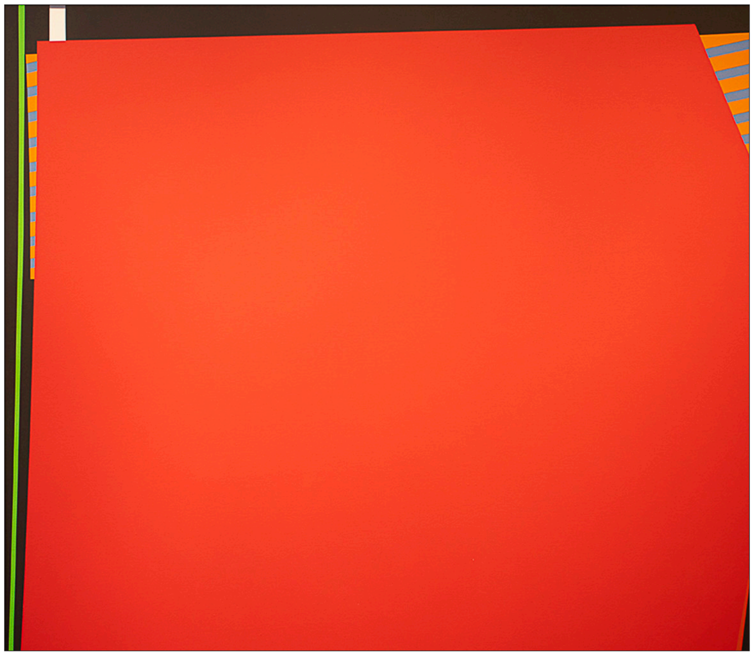
That said . . . there has to be something uniting all that stuff, all those Modernisms. Something in the foundation and supports and roof that holds the house together. And it might as well be what the French painter Maurice Denis wrote in 1890.

> *Remember that a painting—before it is a battle horse, a nude model, or some anecdote—is essentially a flat surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order.*

On reading Denis's declaration you probably said "Sure. So what?" You might have read it a few more times, wondering if there's something painfully obvious you weren't getting. I had the same reaction when I first read it a century after Denis wrote it. Of *course* a painting is "essentially a flat surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order." Again: So what?

You have to consider what Denis blows past to get to that banality: a battle horse (history painting, politics, portraiture), a nude model (figurative painting, nature painting), and narrative (Greek myths, Biblical stories, more politics, etc.). In other words, he skips over everything that painting and art used to serve, everything that paid paintings' bills.

Painting, according to Denis—according to Modernism—doesn't have to be about anything *if it doesn't want to be*. A painting can just be the end result of the act of painting: "a flat surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order." A painting is free to be itself, for itself, and nothing other than that. And if the painting is free, so is the painter: free to do whatever they want. That's one of Modernism's dreams: aesthetic freedom for both subject (the painter) and object (the painting). Painters still had to eat, of course, but they had far more freedom in how to meet their necessities.



Peter Hill. *Shogun*, 1988. Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 69 in.

My father quickly became a Modernist of the most pure sort. His paintings had no interest in history, little attention to nature after 1967, no narrative after 1962 or so. Flat surfaces, colors assembled, and orders of different sorts constitute most of Peter Hill's art. If you're looking for something in his paintings, some meaning beyond what you see and feel, you're looking wrong. You look at his paintings. You consider whether you enjoy them (or not) for whatever reasons you like. And that's about it.

Don't take my word about all this Modernism stuff. Here are the last few lines of an article from Omaha University's *Gateway* newspaper of September 1958, the month my father began teaching there.

> *Two good examples of the exhibits which addle the average sincere freshman are a pair of large canvases by Peter Hill.*
>
> *The eager neophyte looks and asks: What does it mean, what is he trying to say, I mean, what is the story here, content, and all that?*
>
> *Mr. Hill has the answer. "Just color ideas, that's all," he shrugged.*
>
> *In other words, he has been playing with paint, man.*

Yeah. "A flat surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order." "Just color ideas, that's all." Sure, Modernism has many rooms. There are Modernist paintings—some great ones—that choose to tackle history, nature, narrative, etc. Not Peter Hill's. Most of his paintings are just that: paintings. And a few of them, in my judgment, are also great.

I think of Henri Matisse, a twentieth-century Modernist. There's not much physical resemblance between the art of Matisse and Peter Hill—Matisse was all about lines and figures, not just colors—but the artists shared an intention and desired a similar outcome.

> *What I dream of is an art of balance, of purity and serenity, devoid of troubling or depressing subject-matter, an art which could be for every mental worker, for the businessman as well as the man of letters, for example, a soothing, calming influence on the mind, something like a good armchair which provides relaxation from physical fatigue.*

Matisse posits art as a way to chill out from a hard day. His formulation deliberately antagonized artists and intellectuals who wanted art to be difficult, to be political, to imagine a changed world, etc. And lots of really good Modernist art does that; it's easy to find. But Modernism is a house with many rooms, and a house without rooms for relaxation, comfort, and fun is exhausting, abusive, and bleak.

My father took the making of art seriously, but he was a cheerful and optimistic man, and those qualities manifest in his art. His art is serious; his art—especially his later art—is also fun. "Playing with paint, man."

Moving on. You're probably not curious about how this book was made, but I'm going to tell you anyway, as it's now part of Peter Hill's story.

How This Book Was Made

Around 2015 I got it in my head that it'd be nice if people in Dad's family had a book of his art. Nothing fancy, just good shots of the stuff we owned in a slender tome. I didn't act on it, though. Wasn't sure of the logistics, and it didn't seem urgent.

In December 2018 my father and I have a very strange conversation. More on that later.

Dad dies in April 2020. It occurs to me that my father's paintings will outlive him by decades or longer but the memory of him will not.

September 2021. Digging through Dad's studio, I find the raw materials for this book and realize I have to make it.

What materials? Well. In 2022, the word "artist" brings to mind certain traits: poor (or spectacularly wealthy), disorganized (unless someone else manages them), and unconcerned about money. But Dad was firmly middle-class, organized, and business-minded. He was ambitious, especially in his youth. He wanted to launch his art into the world—to galleries, to museums, to businesses. He wanted it seen, and he wanted to get paid for it.

But before my dad could get people to buy his art, he had to show it to them—and it's not practical to carry paintings around to people, especially if they're in other towns. So before the internet and digital photos, how did artists show faraway people their art? They made slides and mailed them through their country's postal service. Those slides were what kickstarted this book.

This is called a "slide projector."

These are called "slides."

Even in 2022 we primarily use digital photographs, so I need to explain "slides" to some of the younger readers. It's like this:

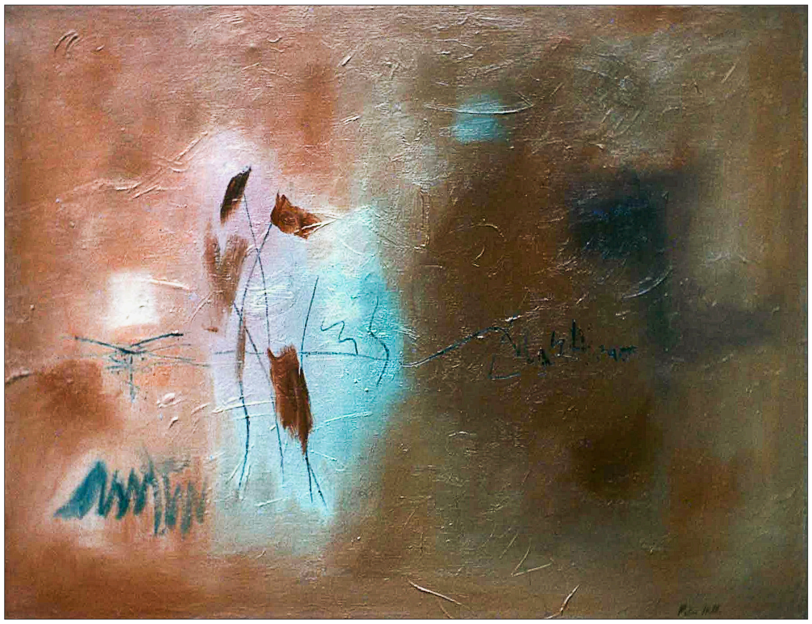
- You take a photograph.
- The photograph shows up on a thin layer of film (transparent plastic) that is 2.3 by 3.4 cm, giving it a surface area of 7.82 cm^2.
- The film is held by a frame on which you write information: title, date, dimensions, and—if it's abstract work—which side is "up."
- You put the slides into an envelope and send them to an exhibitor or buyer with a note that says, "We talked about you showing or buying my art. Here's what it's like. What do you think?"
- Some decision-maker puts the slides into a machine that shines a light through them and projects the image on to a large flat surface. (Hence the machine's name: "slide projector.")
- If everything goes well, recognition and profit. If not, a thank-you-for-your-slides note.

My dad made hundreds of slides documenting his output. If he didn't have a slide, the painting sold so quickly he didn't have time to make one.

Discovering the slides lit the fire. Here was Peter Hill's sixty-year creative career in five thick binders. And best of all were the gigantic Ektachrome transparencies.

Ektachrome transparencies, far larger than normal slides.

In matters of mechanical reproduction, size matters. Normal slides have a surface area of 7.82 cm^2. Ektachrome transparencies have a surface area of 25 cm^2—more than three times a normal slide's. That might not sound like much of a difference, but it's huge. The projected image is far more detailed than a normal slide's. Even better, these large transparencies were in great shape. Best of all, they capture paintings my father made at Cranbrook from 1956 to 1958. They document him developing his talents to become a professional artist.



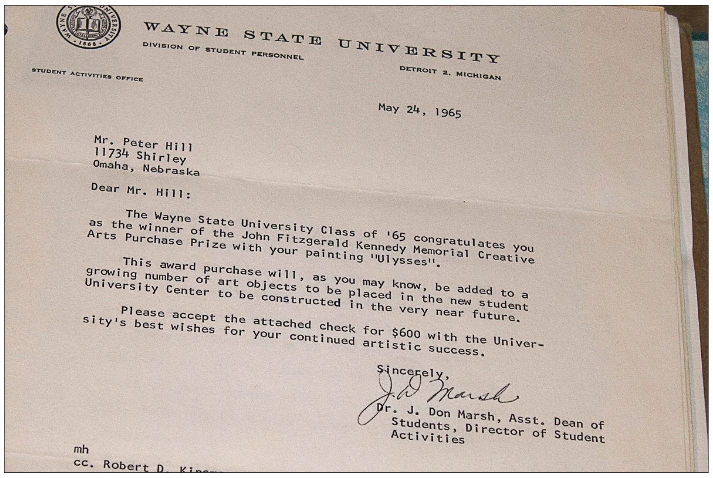
Peter Hill. Untitled, 1956–8. Oil on canvas.
Image digitized from an Ektachrome transparency.

I scanned ("put into digital form") all the slides. With the exception of the Cranbrook transparencies, most of the slides aren't great. Dad was an excellent painter, but photography was not his thing. Worse, he didn't invest in high-quality slides, and he stored them in plastic sheets that caused them to discolor and fade over time. And even good slides don't have the greatest resolution. They're capable of giving a general idea of the work and not much more.

All that said, this book is a "Collected Works," so it includes images from even the worst slides. If an image's colors were beyond recovering, it's here in black and white.

Other documents helped me track down the locations of works:

- Correspondence regarding his art, including notification of purchases and awards.



WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF STUDENT PERSONNEL
STUDENT ACTIVITIES OFFICE
DETROIT 2, MICHIGAN

May 24, 1965

Mr. Peter Hill
11734 Shirley
Omaha, Nebraska

Dear Mr. Hill:

The Wayne State University Class of '65 congratulates you as the winner of the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Memorial Creative Arts Purchase Prize with your painting "Ulysses".

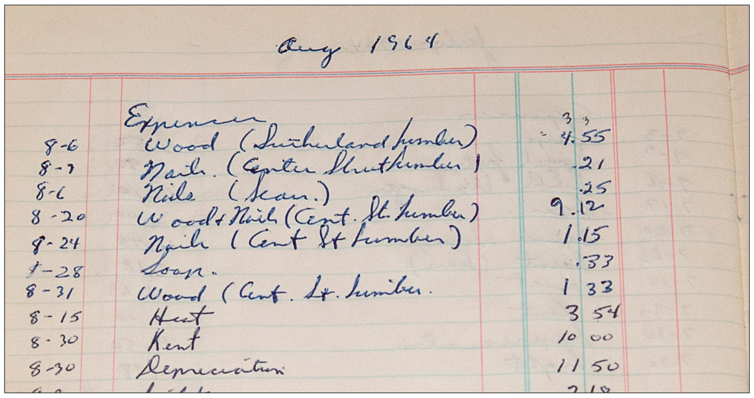
This award purchase will, as you may know, be added to a growing number of art objects to be placed in the new student University Center to be constructed in the very near future.

Please accept the attached check for $600 with the University's best wishes for your continued artistic success.

Sincerely,
J. D. Marsh
Dr. J. Don Marsh, Asst. Dean of Students, Director of Student Activities

mh
cc. Robert D.

- Ledgers showing what he spent to make art, who he sold it to, and how much money he made (or lost) in a given month and year.

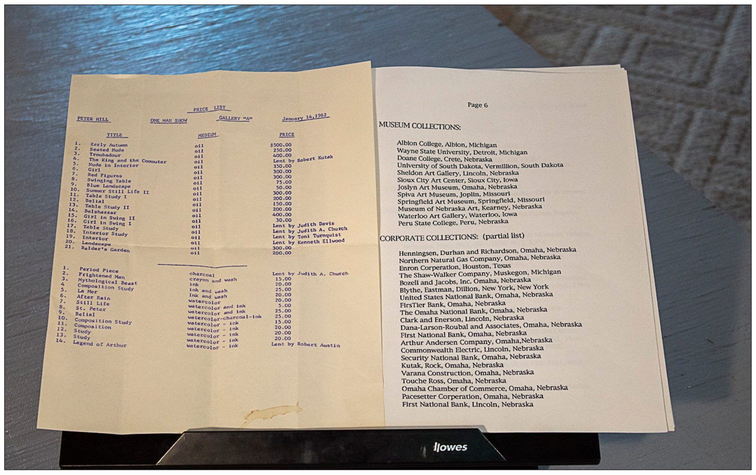


Aug 1964

	Expenses	
8-6	Wood (Sutherland lumber)	4.55
8-7	Nails (Center St. lumber)	.21
8-6	Nails (Sears)	.25
8-20	Wood & Nails (Cent. St. lumber)	9.12
8-24	Nails (Cent St lumber)	1.15
8-28	Soap.	.33
8-31	Wood (Cent. St. lumber.	1 33
8-15	Heat	3 54
8-30	Rent	10 00
8-30	Depreciation	11 50

Look closely for the price of soap in August 1964.

- Price lists, resumes, and lists of collections.



PRICE LIST

PETER HILL ONE MAN SHOW GALLERY "A" January 14,1962

	TITLE	MEDIUM	PRICE
1.	Early Autumn	oil	$500.00
2.	Seated Nude	oil	250.00
3.	Troubadour	oil	400.00
4.	The King and the Commuter	oil	Lent by Robert Kutak
5.	Nude in Interior	oil	350.00
6.	Girl	oil	300.00
7.	Red Figures	oil	300.00
8.	Swinging Table	oil	75.00
9.	Blue Landscape	oil	50.00
10.	Summer Still Life II	oil	300.00
11.	Table Study I	oil	200.00
12.	Belial	oil	150.00
13.	Table Study II	oil	200.00
14.	Belshazzar	oil	400.00
15.	Girl in Swing II	oil	30.00
16.	Girl in Swing I	oil	Lent by Judith Davis
17.	Table Study	oil	Lent by Judith A. Church
18.	Interior Study	oil	Lent by Toni Turnquist
19.	Interior	oil	Lent by Kenneth Ellwood
20.	Landscape	oil	300.00
21.	Balder's Garden	oil	200.00

1.	Period Piece	charcoal	Lent by Judith A. Church
2.	Frightened Man	crayon and wash	15.00
3.	Mythological Beast	ink	20.00
4	Composition Study	ink and wash	25.00
5.	La Mer	ink and wash	20.00
6.	After Rain	watercolor	20.00
7.	Still Life	watercolor and ink	5.00
8.	St. Peter	watercolor and ink	25.00
9.	Belial	watercolor-charcoal-ink	25.00
10.	Composition Study	watercolor - ink	15.00
11.	Composition	watercolor - ink	20.00
12.	Study	watercolor - ink	20.00
13.	Study	watercolor - ink	20.00
14.	Legend of Arthur	watercolor - ink	Lent by Robert Austin

Page 6

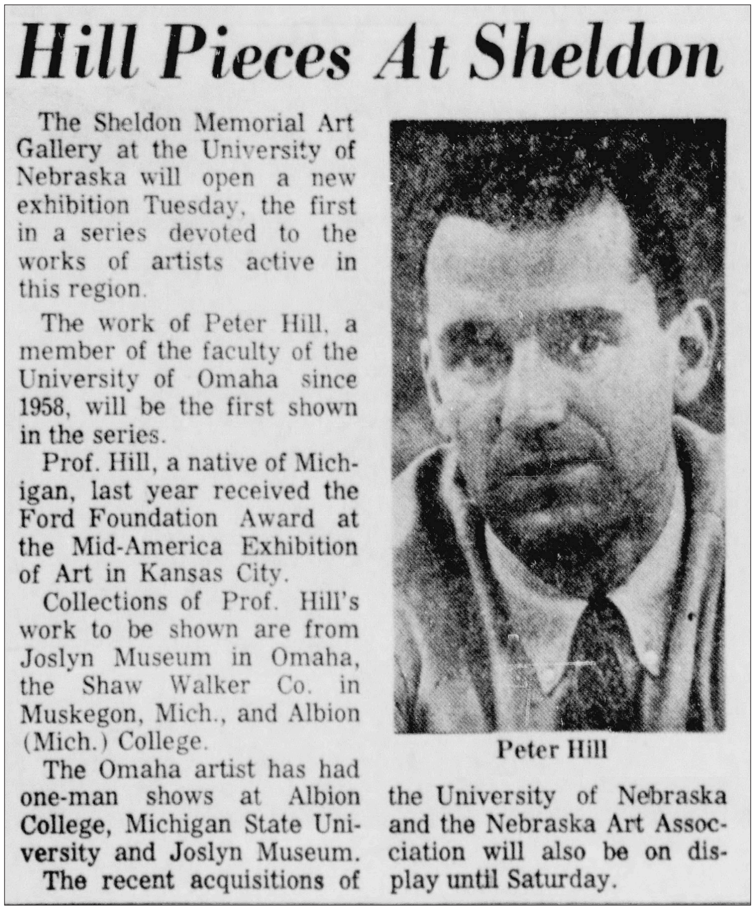
MUSEUM COLLECTIONS:

Albion College, Albion, Michigan
Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan
Doane College, Crete, Nebraska
University of South Dakota, Vermillion, South Dakota
Sheldon Art Gallery, Lincoln, Nebraska
Sioux City Art Center, Sioux City, Iowa
Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska
Spiva Art Museum, Joplin, Missouri
Springfield Art Museum, Springfield, Missouri
Museum of Nebraska Art, Kearney, Nebraska
Waterloo Art Gallery, Waterloo, Iowa
Peru State College, Peru, Nebraska

CORPORATE COLLECTIONS: (partial list)

Henningsen, Durhan and Richardson, Omaha, Nebraska
Northern Natural Gas Company, Omaha, Nebraska
Enron Corperation, Houston, Texas
The Shaw-Walker Company, Muskegon, Michigan
Bozell and Jacobs, Inc. Omaha, Nebraska
Blythe, Eastman, Dillion, New York, New York
United States National Bank, Omaha, Nebraska
FirsTier Bank, Omaha, Nebraska
The Omaha National Bank, Omaha, Nebraska
Clark and Enerson, Lincoln, Nebraska
Dana-Larson-Roubal and Associates, Omaha, Nebraska
First National Bank, Omaha, Nebraska
Arthur Andersen Company, Omaha,Nebraska
Commonwealth Electric, Lincoln, Nebraska
Security National Bank, Omaha, Nebraska
Kutak, Rock, Omaha, Nebraska
Varana Construction, Omaha, Nebraska
Touche Ross, Omaha, Nebraska
Omaha Chamber of Commerce, Omaha, Nebraska
Pacesetter Corperation, Omaha, Nebraska
First National Bank, Lincoln, Nebraska

- Newspaper articles of all sorts.



Hill Pieces At Sheldon

The Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery at the University of Nebraska will open a new exhibition Tuesday, the first in a series devoted to the works of artists active in this region.

The work of Peter Hill, a member of the faculty of the University of Omaha since 1958, will be the first shown in the series.

Prof. Hill, a native of Michigan, last year received the Ford Foundation Award at the Mid-America Exhibition of Art in Kansas City.

Collections of Prof. Hill's work to be shown are from Joslyn Museum in Omaha, the Shaw Walker Co. in Muskegon, Mich., and Albion (Mich.) College.

The Omaha artist has had one-man shows at Albion College, Michigan State University and Joslyn Museum.

The recent acquisitions of the University of Nebraska and the Nebraska Art Association will also be on display until Saturday.

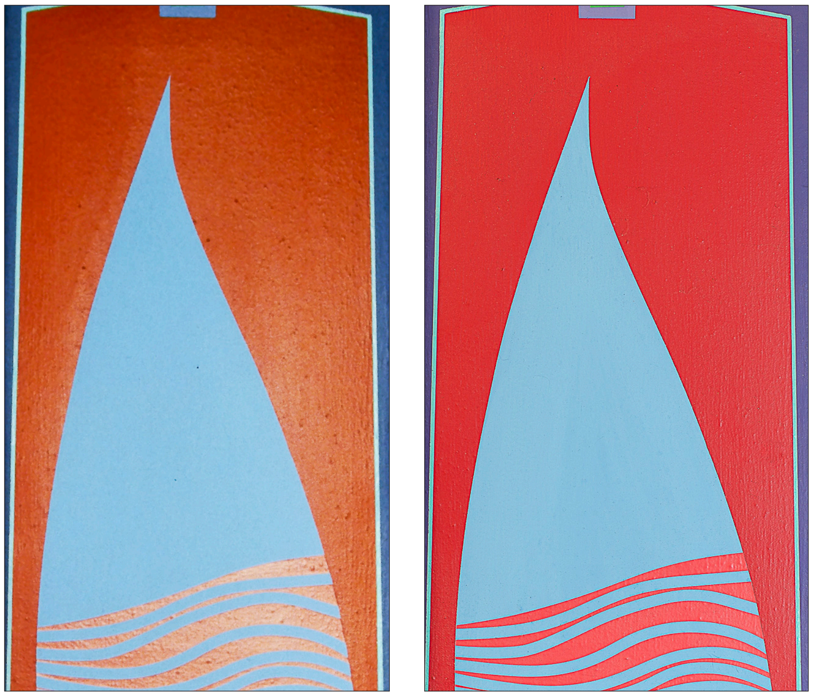
Peter Hill

Lincoln Journal-Star, September 29, 1963

Put all that together, and you have the primary sources for a book about an artist's career.

About the images of his art, though . . . if they were made mostly from the slides (even those Ektachrome slides), it'd be a lousy book. His art wouldn't look great. In fact, most of it would look bad. You'd be disappointed by it. Worse: my father would have been disappointed by it.

Check out these two images. They're of the same painting: one is from a slide (one of the better ones); the other is taken by a contemporary digital camera. Not hard to tell which is which.



For this book to be any good at all, more than digitized slides and transparencies were needed. Good-to-great quality photos of the paintings and drawings were required, and that involved modern camerawork. Go back to the Acknowledgments section and you'll get all the details of that effort there.

So, I learned the rudiments of photography and photoediting and book layout and assembled the book. It took about a year. And that's the story of this book.

What now?

What Now?

Now you dig in. (You probably dug in first, but let's pretend otherwise.) Let's manage your expectations so you're not too disappointed by what you find.

Managing Expectations

First: Keep in mind that many images are from digitized slides marred by glare and discoloration. This is a "collected works," though, so those images are in here. Just hold your nose, glean what you can from them, and enjoy the better spreads.

Next: Understand that even the photographs made in 2022 with modern cameras were (for the most part) taken by amateur photographers under wildly different lighting conditions. Add to that the reality that even the best book printers cannot match the vibrancy and accuracy of digital photography, the chances are very good that when you reach your paintings or drawings you'll say, "Well, that's not quite right. . . ." For that I'm sorry. The best we can hope for is that the images are persuasive approximations of the works you own. And if you're disappointed, remember: You own the original and can go look at it any time you like.

And: Some sections are more enjoyable than others. Some will be crowd-pleasers—the flowers, the tondos, maybe the first Joslyn show. Others just aren't as fun. Again: "collected works."

Finally: This is not a book you read start to finish. No art book is, unless you're pursuing a graduate degree in art history. This is a book to leave out on your coffee table (or whatever) and occasionally leaf through. That's just the nature of books like this.

Moving On

Whether you're a relative, a friend, or an institution, you've now got a basic understanding of why you own this book. There's a table of contents that gives the bones of the thing, headers and footers to help you keep your bearings, and an afterword that should answer any lingering questions.

Love you, Dad. *Ars longa, vita brevis*. Nobody knew that better than you.

Albion College: 1952 to 1956

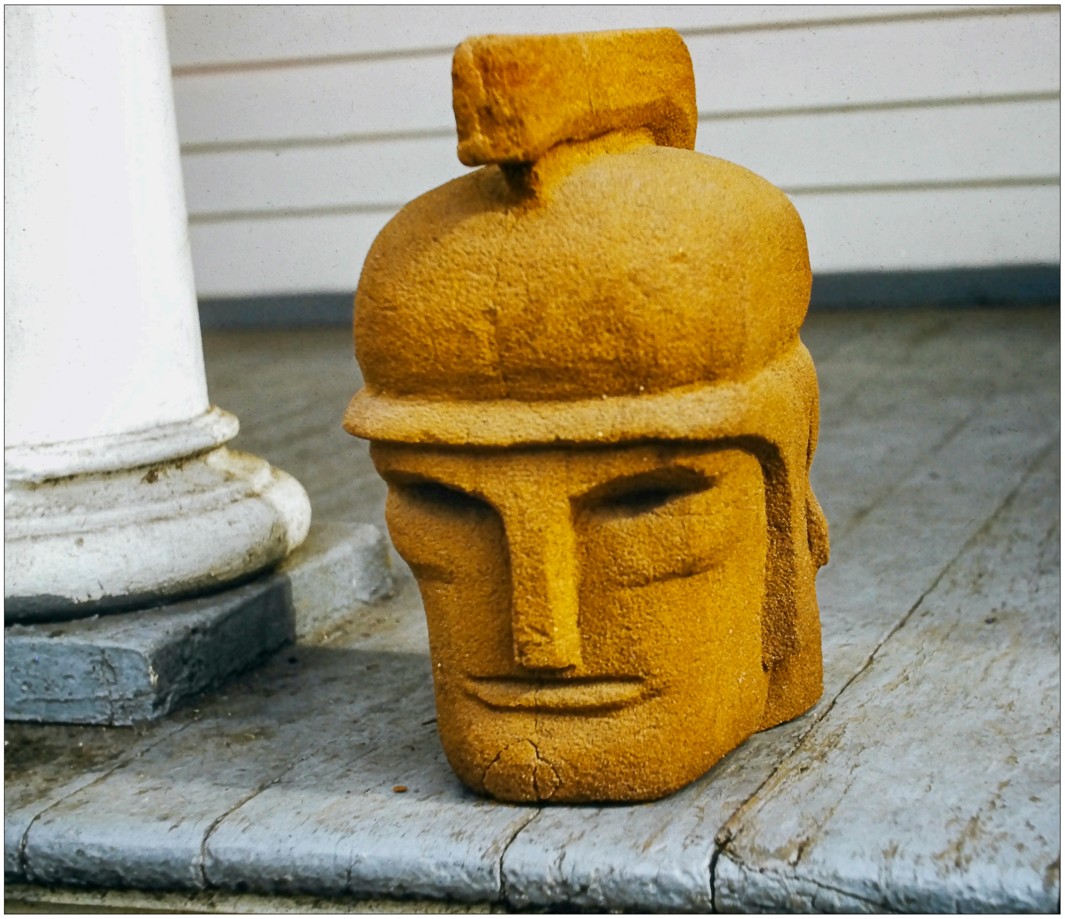
My father attended Albion College in Michigan from 1952 to 1956. While there he met his future wife, Joan Campbell. He majored in economics and then found himself with some time on his hands. In his own words:

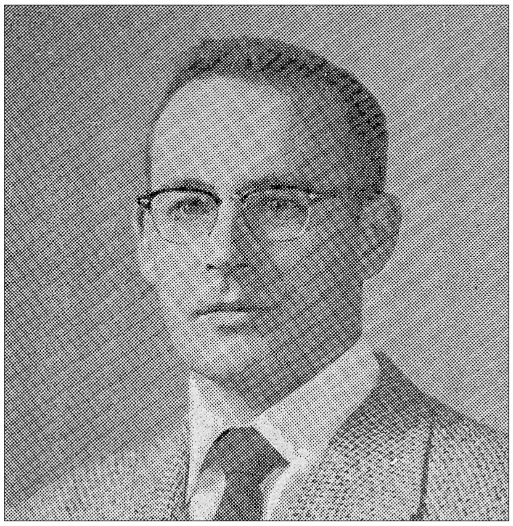
> *In my junior year I decided to get another major because I had all the economics that I wanted to take and . . . I could do it without any difficulty. What to take that might work well with economics? Of course it had to be Art.*

The next few pages represent a young man from Detroit, Michigan, in the middle of the twentieth century figuring out that he wanted to become an artist.

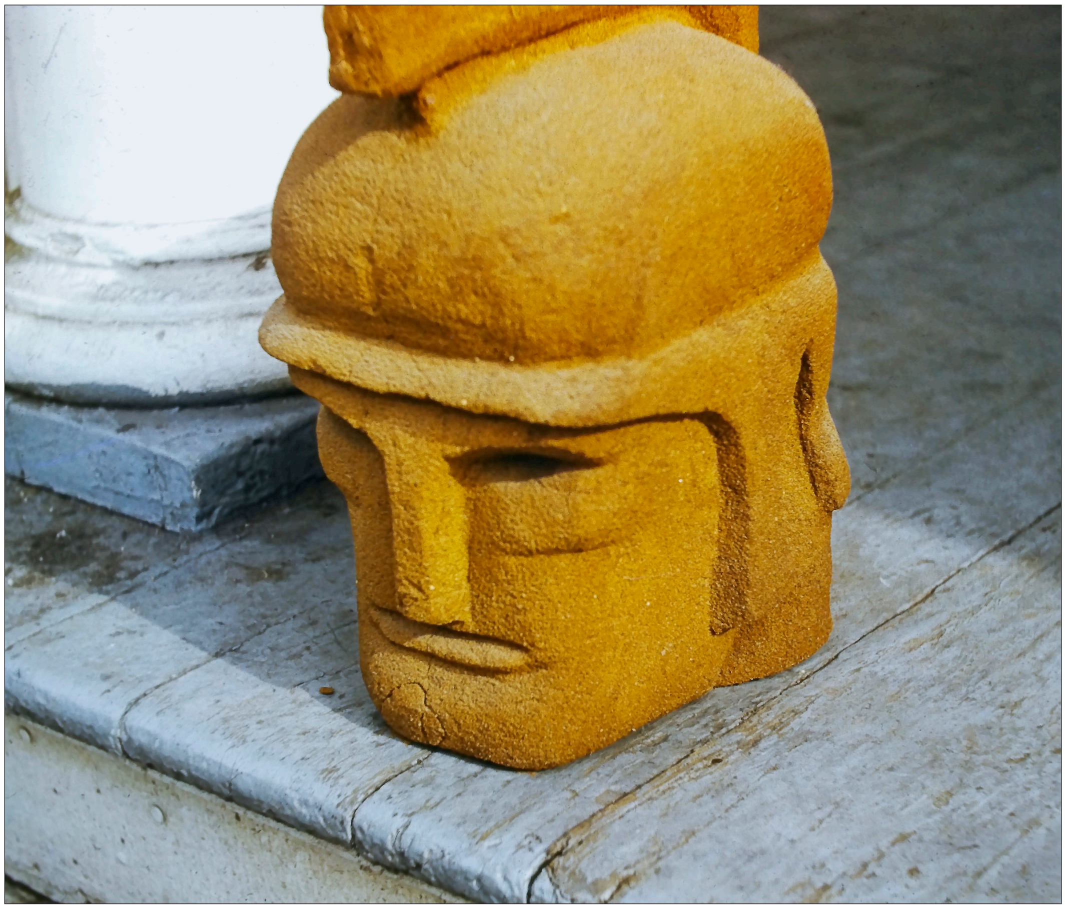
Photo of the Albion Art Club. *The Albionian*, 1955. Peter Hill was Treasurer in this year.

Photo of the Albion Art Club. *The Albionian*, 1956. Peter Hill was President in this year.



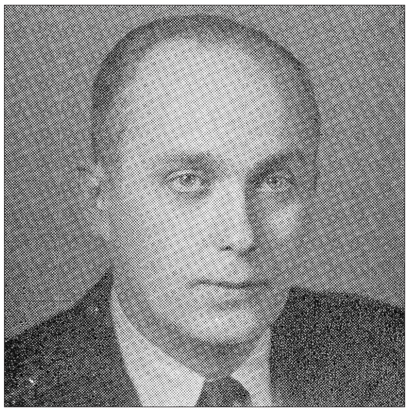


Richard Leach (1923–2000), professor of ceramics and sculpture at Albion College. He and my father would remain friends long after graduation.

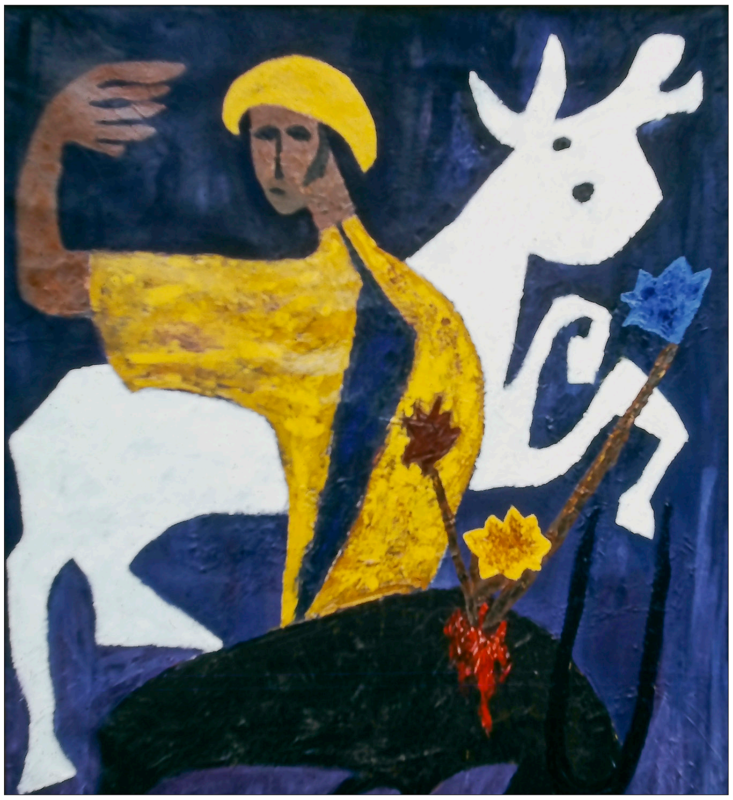


Constance E. Fowler (1907–1996), professor of printmaking and painting at Albion College

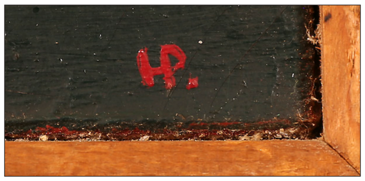
Peter Hill. *Head*, 1955–6. Clay. Gifted to Helen Johnson Hill, the artist's mother.



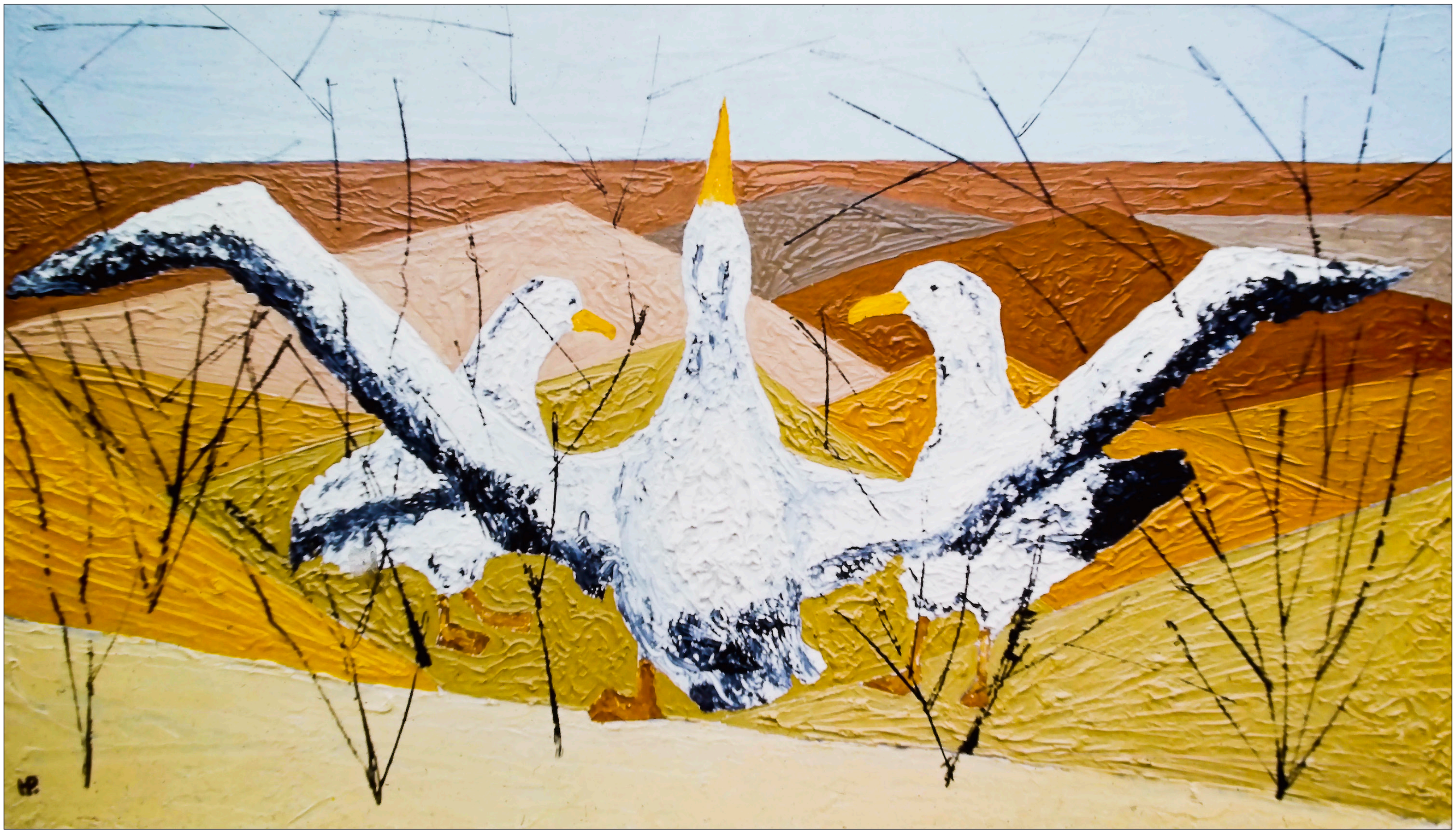
Vernon Bobbitt (1911–1992), professor of art history and painting at Albion



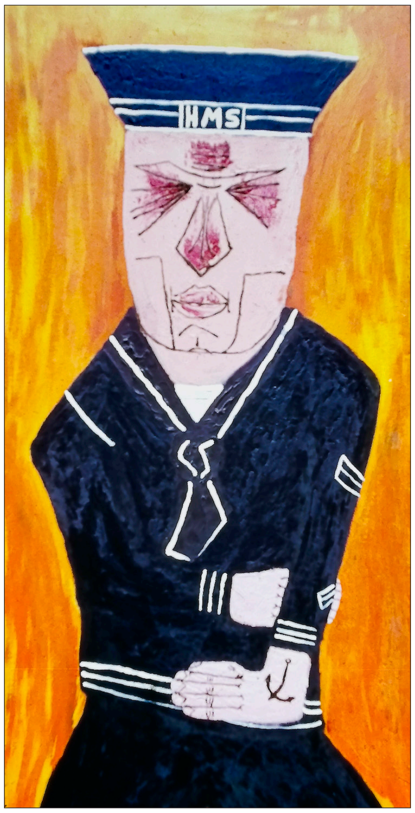
Matador, 1955–56. Oil on canvas. Gifted to Richard Leach.



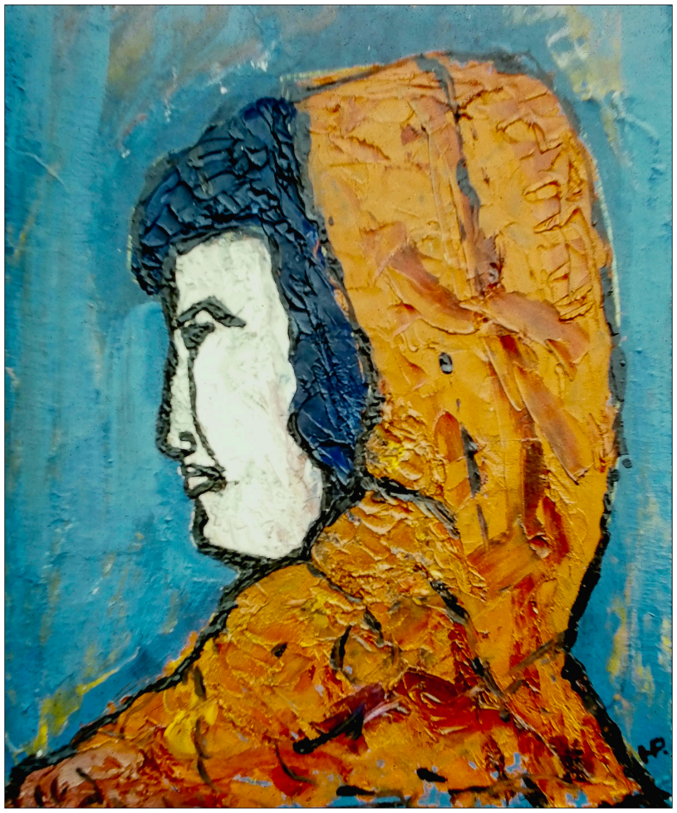
Peter Hill's initials (mid-1950s)



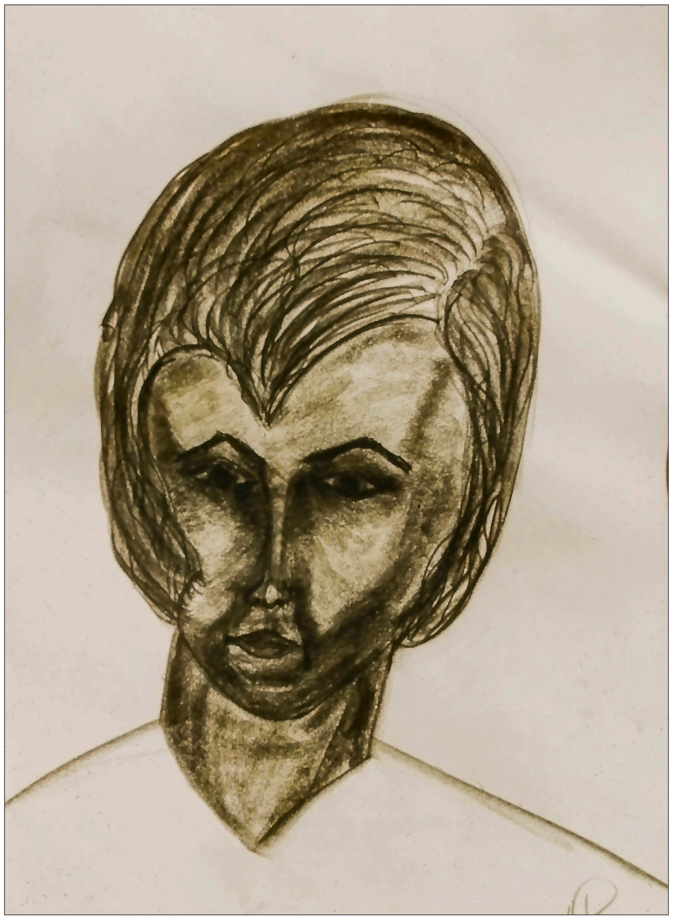
Gulls on the Dunes, 1956. Oil on canvas. Gifted to Dick Kemp.



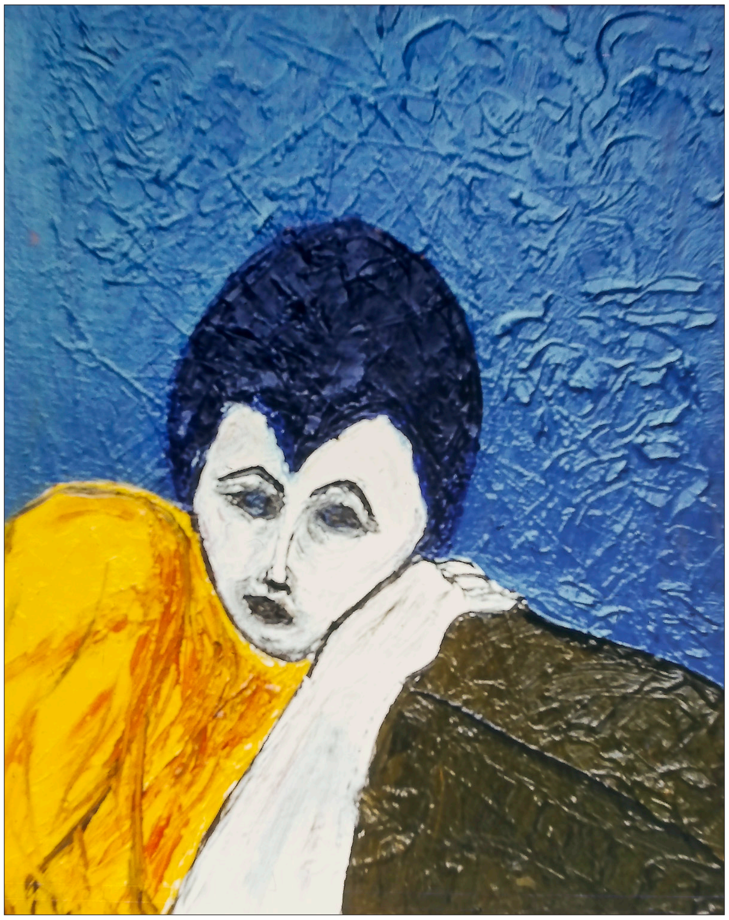
Sailor, 1955–6. Oil on wood.



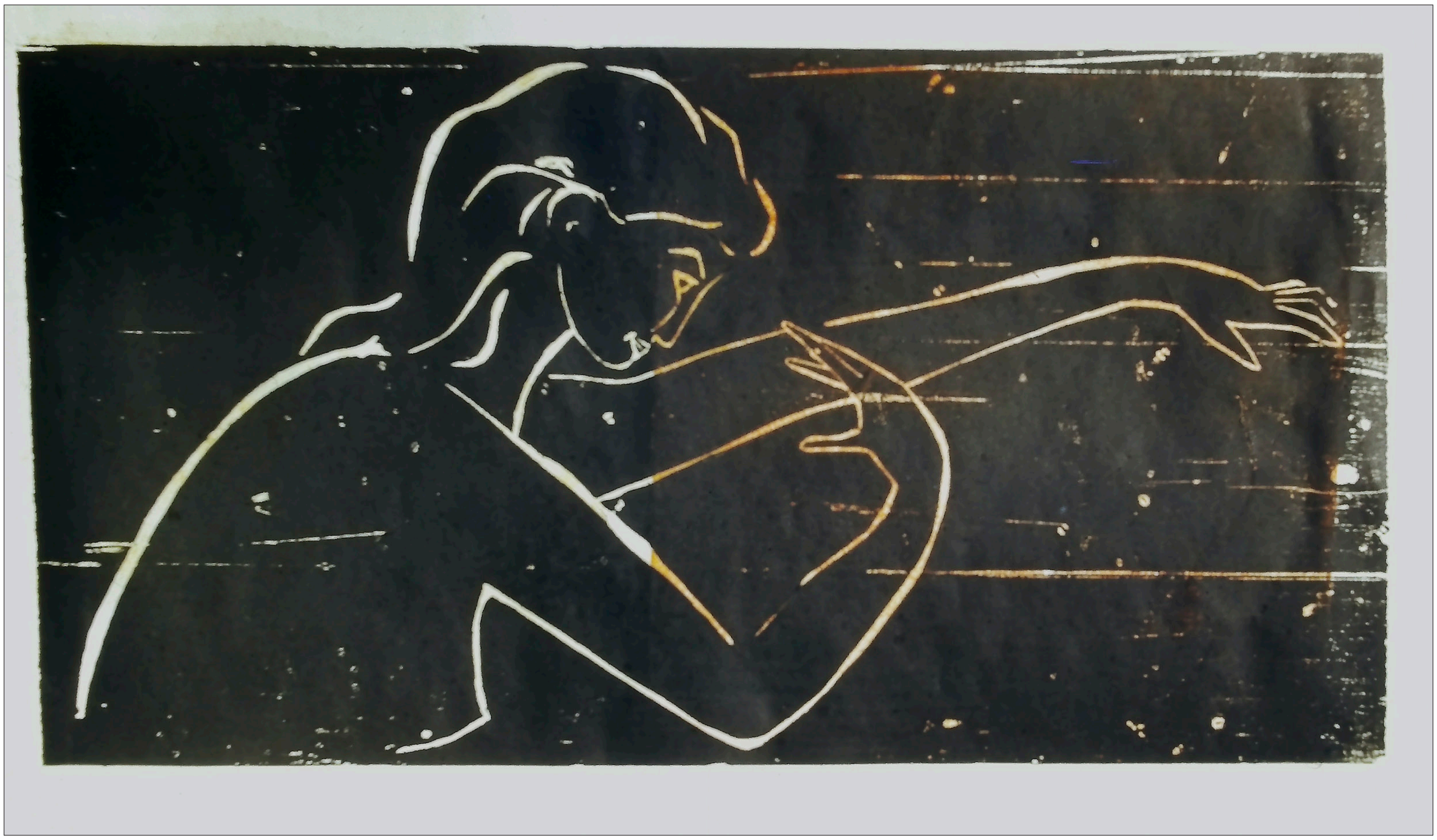
Untitled, 1955–6. Oil on canvas.



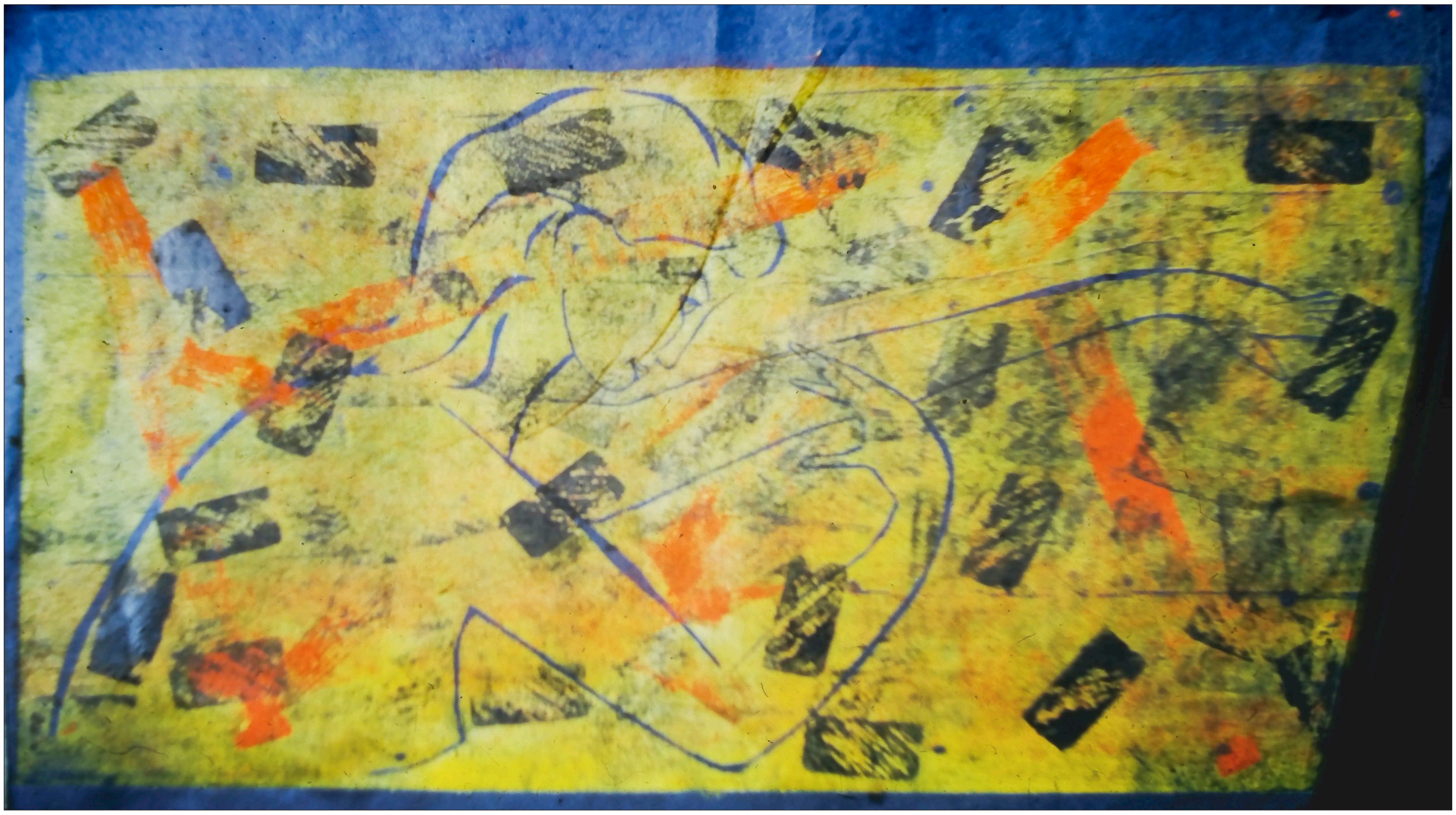
Untitled (head), 1955–6. Graphite on paper.



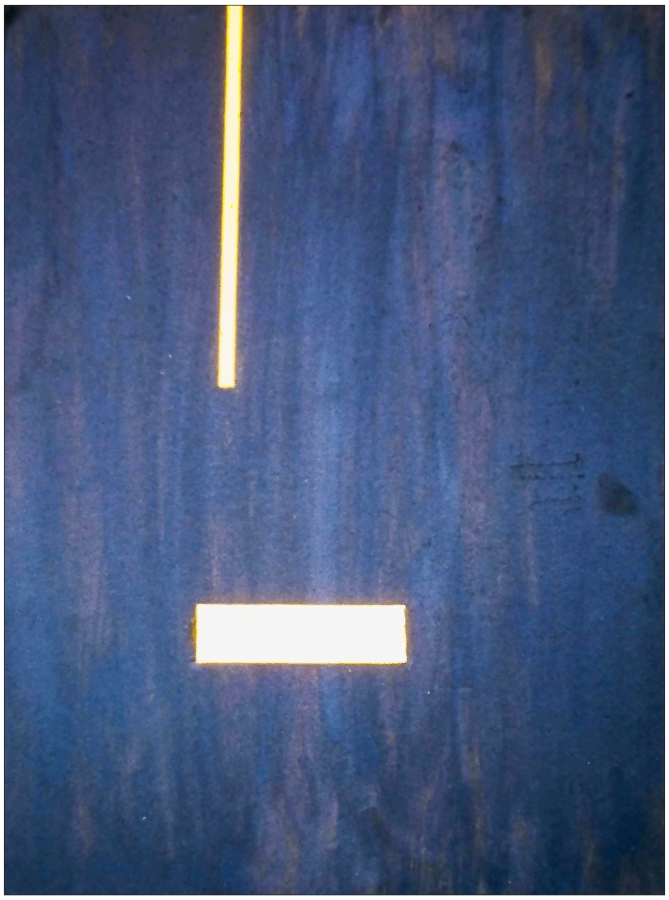
Untitled, 1955–6. Oil on canvas.



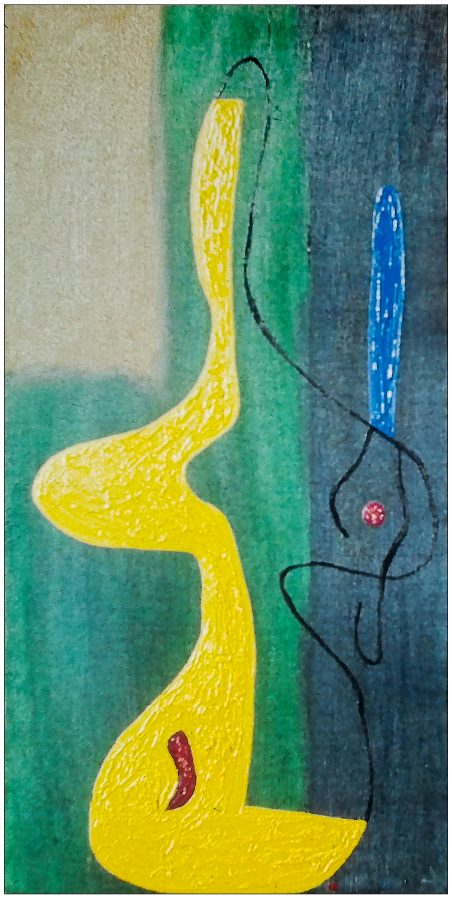
Woman, 1955–6. Lithograph.



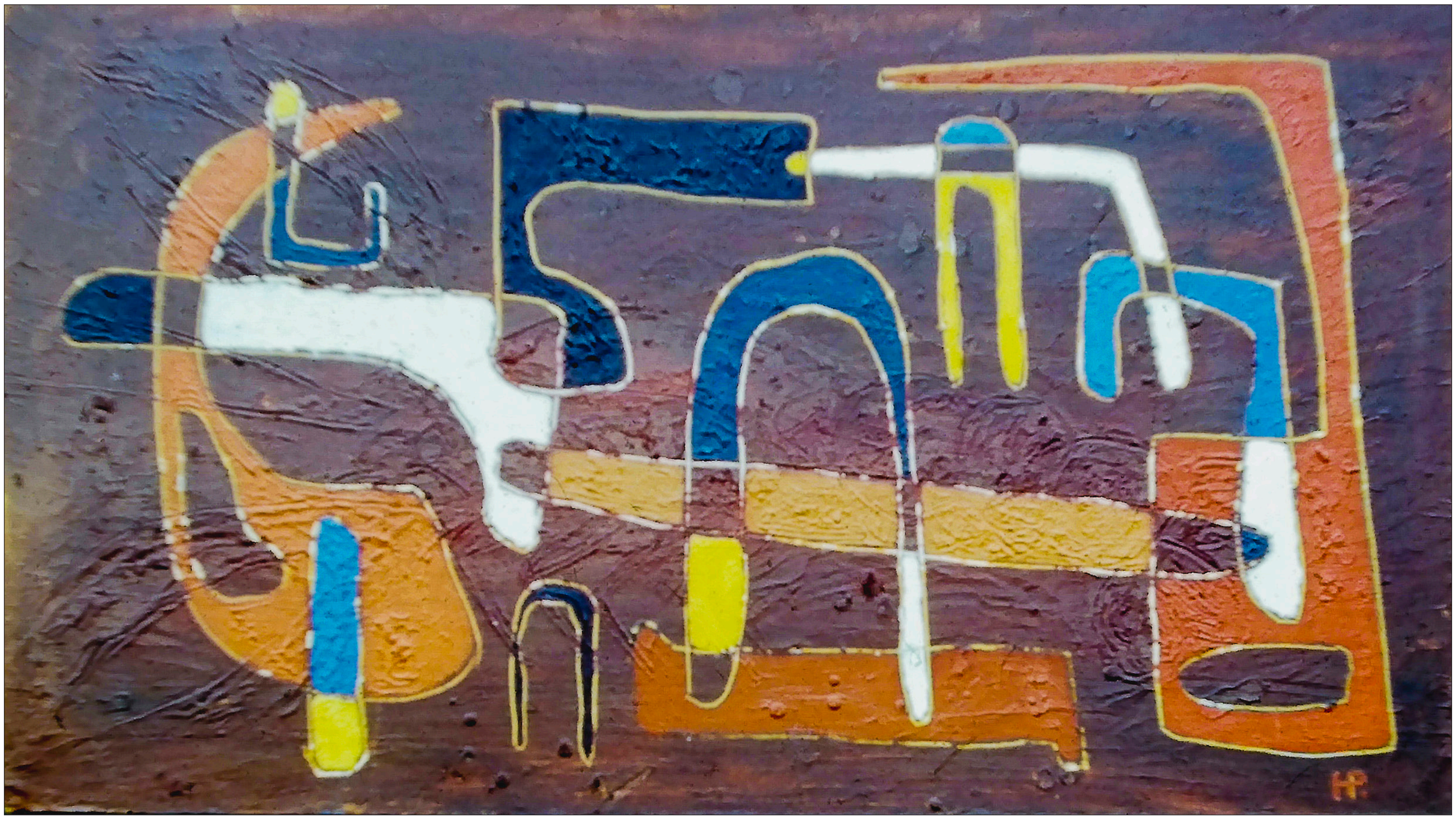
Woman, 1955–6. Lithograph.



Untitled, 1955–6. Oil on wood.



Untitled, 1955–6. Oil on wood.



Untitled, 1955–6. Oil on canvas. Gifted to Richard Leach.

Albion Pleiad, March 9, 1956

Current Student Art Exhibit Includes Variety of Paintings, Ceramics, Designs, Art Structures

"They want to buy my painting," announced David Sennema, Grand Rapids, as he hurried out of the student art exhibit, currently open in the exhibition room of Stockwell Memorial library. "They want to buy it and burn it!" Sennema's unusual oil painting, a depiction of a "Floozy," is hanging in a far corner of the room. It is a good example of the non-conformity and experimentation displayed in this showing.

Student ceramics, sculptures, paintings, collages, drawings, prints, sketches, designs and art structures are combined in the hall and main exhibition rooms to form a potpourri of color and form. The airy frames used in displaying the works give the structure of the exhibit a smacking of modern, clean-cut design.

The styles used by the individual student artists range from naturalism to great abstraction. . . .

"Matador" [page 12] by Peter Hill, Detroit, is an imposing oil painting catching the eye and inviting the visitor, through its use of dark and light tones, to the group of exhibitions at the north end of the gallery. . . .

Along a window sill is shown the work of faculty children in the class taught by Hill.

Albion Pleiad, May 18, 1956

Senior Art Exhibit Features Variety of Styles and Media

Variety of styles and media are evident in the current art exhibit in the exhibition room of the Stockwell Memorial library. The show features the art of nine senior art majors and includes a selection of the most outstanding work each senior has done during the past four years. . . .

Peter Hill, Detroit, has developed a highly abstract styling using bright colors and unusual shapes, as can be seen in his oil paintings and cut paper designs. A large print, an abstraction of a man in black and yellow, is also shown, along with a wood sculpture of two figures.

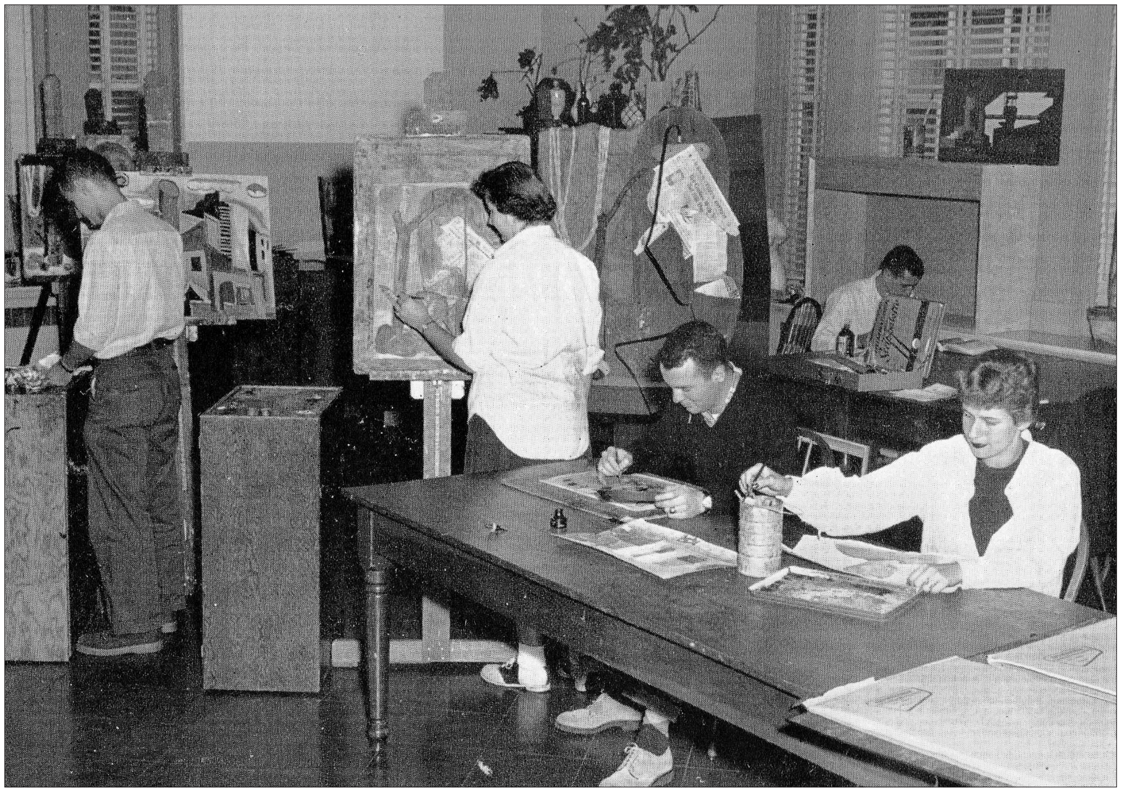
Albion Pleiad, May 18, 1956

Art Sale Features Watercolors, Oils

Watercolors and oils composed the main body of works on display at the Art Club's annual sale last Tuesday. The event, usually a sidewalk sale, took place in the Student Center because of rainy weather.

Other articles for sale were ceramics, prints and various miscellaneous items. All articles were first passed by a jury, selected to judge the quality of all the works, before they were put on sale.

Prints received the best response and those on display were by Peter Hill, Detroit. . . .



Students in the Albion art lab, 1955 or 1956.

Cranbrook Academy of Art: 1956 to 1958

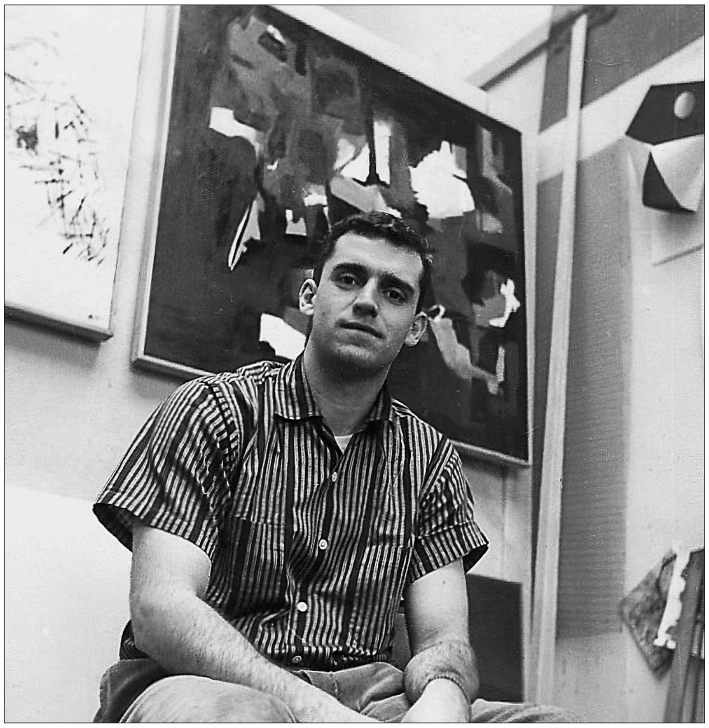
After graduating from Albion College in June 1956, my father was accepted to the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, roughly 20 miles outside Detroit. Founded in 1932, Cranbrook was (and remains) one of America's leading graduate schools for architecture, art, and design. The school itself is an architectural marvel, and its museum is world-class. You should go visit it.

My father had fond memories of Cranbrook and was extremely proud to have gone there. The only specific story I recall him telling, however, is this: His instructors wanted him to matriculate earlier than was normal, but Dad insisted he stay one more semester to hone his craft. He was mostly certain that the professors had enough confidence in his talents that they wanted to get him out into the world, but a small part of him was concerned that they just wanted to be done with him.

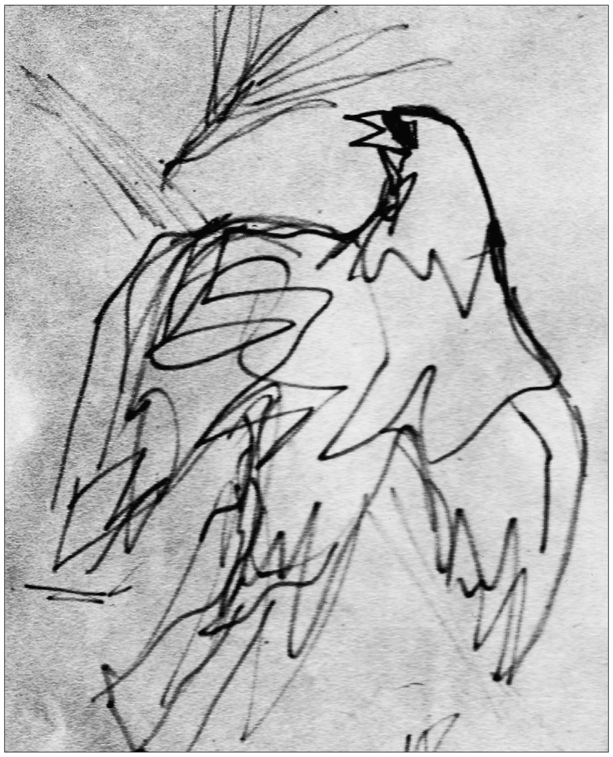
Based on the art he produced at Cranbrook (see the following pages) and how the rest of his life went, it's pretty clear which interpretation is correct.

On March 21, 1957, Peter Hill married Joan ("Jody") Campbell, who was then a junior at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

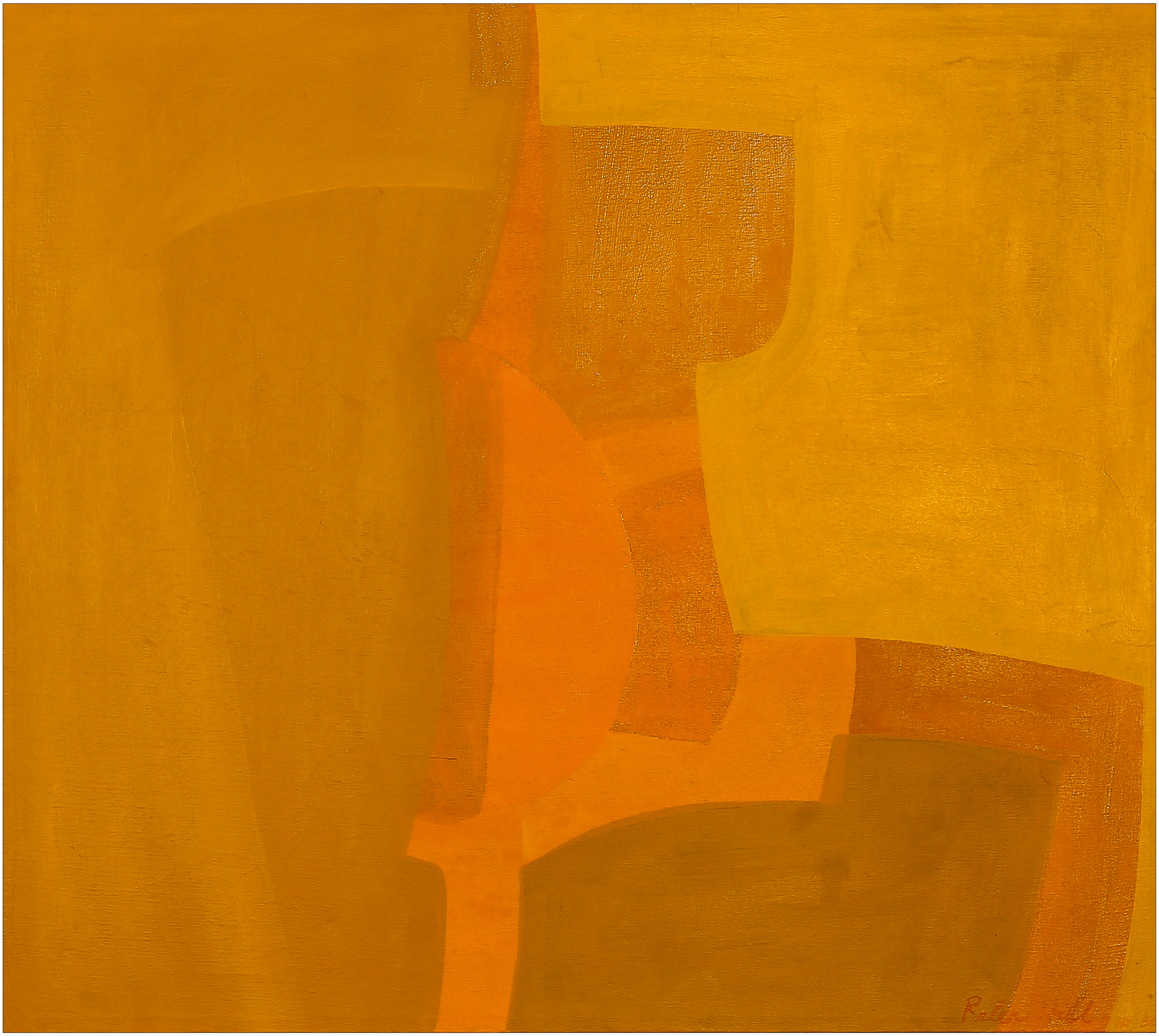
Peter and his future wife Joan Campbell, 1956



The artist at Cranbrook, probably 1957

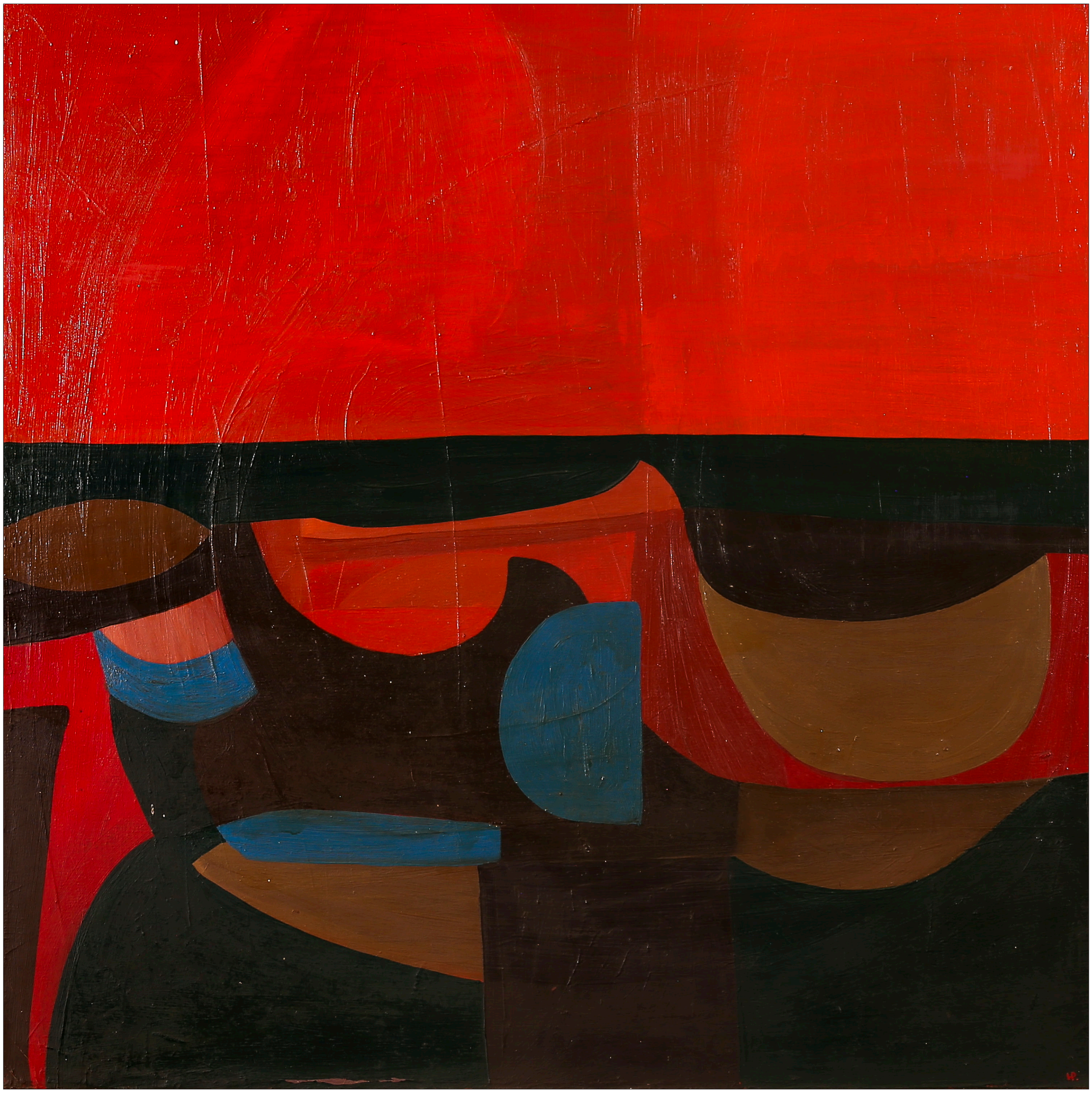


Bird, 1956–8. Ink on paper. This image appears at both the beginning and the ending of Peter Hill's Master of Fine Arts thesis.



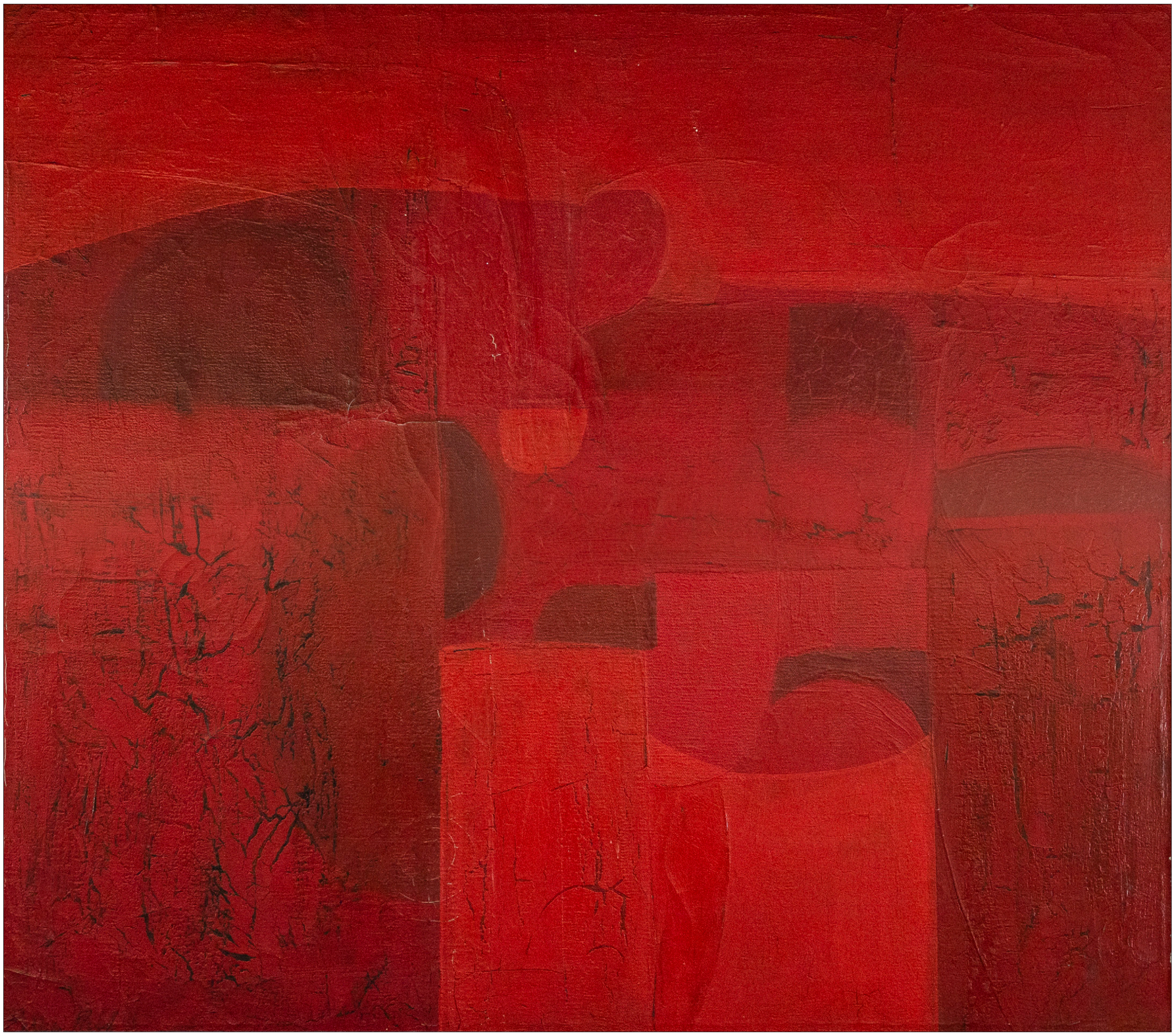
Untitled

1956. Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in.
Collection of Stephen and Leslie Hill.



Untitled

1956. Oil on canvas, 33.5 x 32.5 in.
Collection of Jonathan and Maureen Hill.

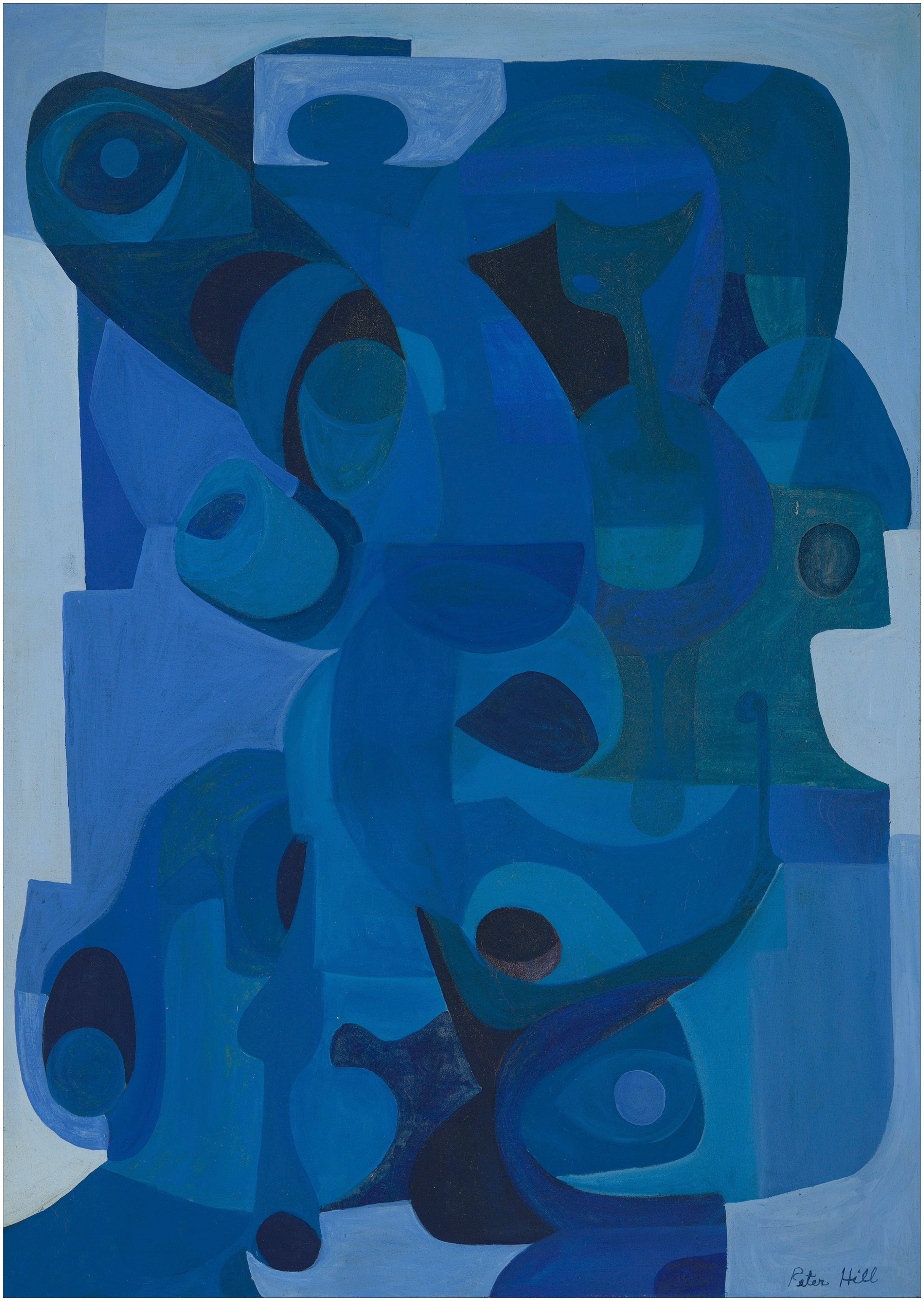


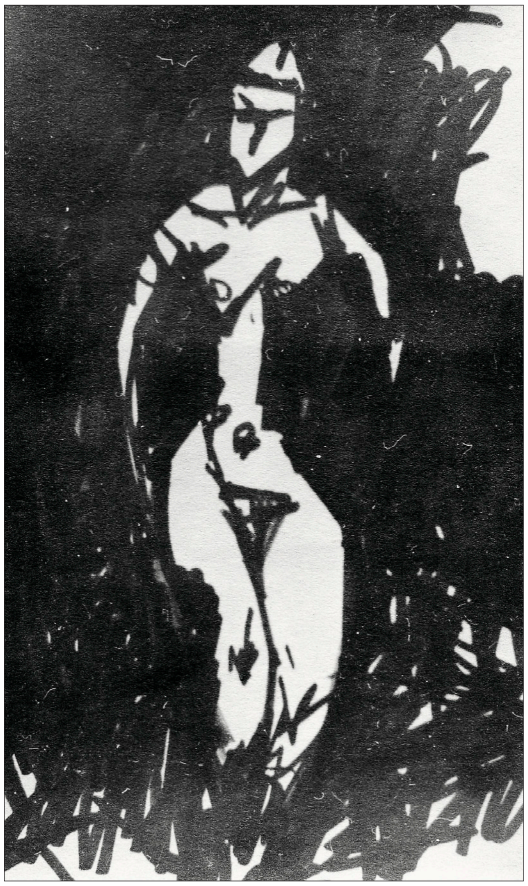
Untitled *(Big Red)*

1957. Oil on canvas, 30.5 x 34.5 in.
Collection of Marilynn Simpson.

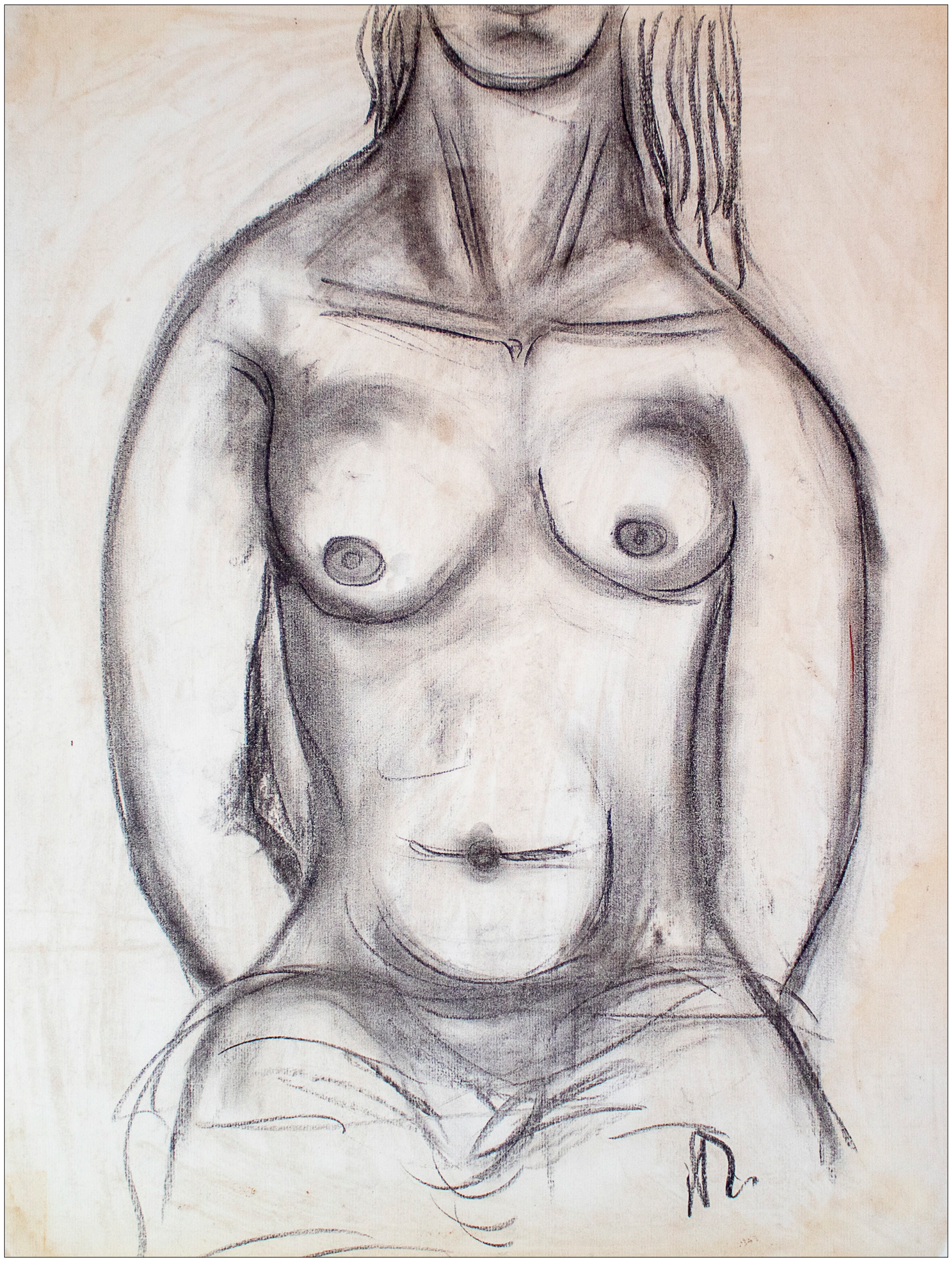
Untitled (opposite)

1956. Oil on canvas, 54 x 36 in.
Collection of Peter Stevenson.

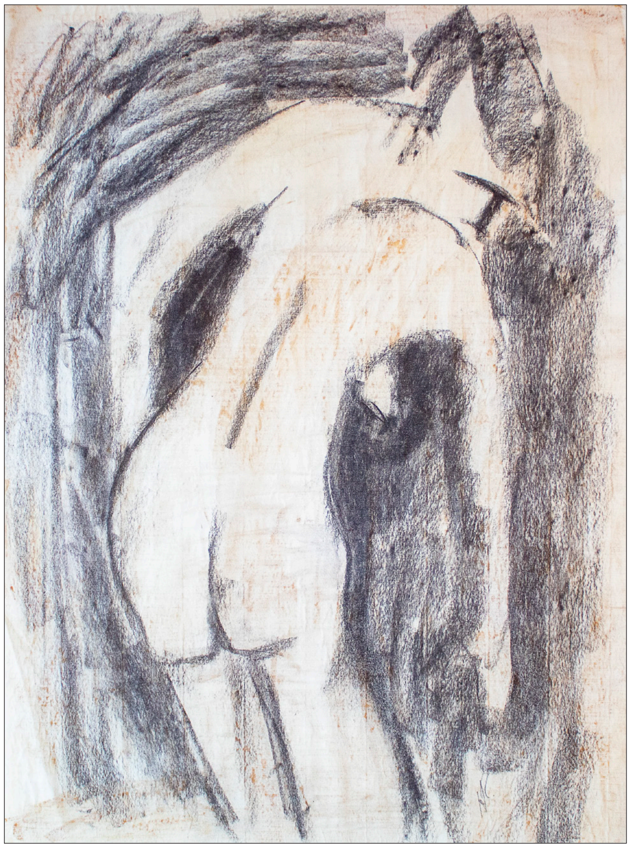

Peter Hill



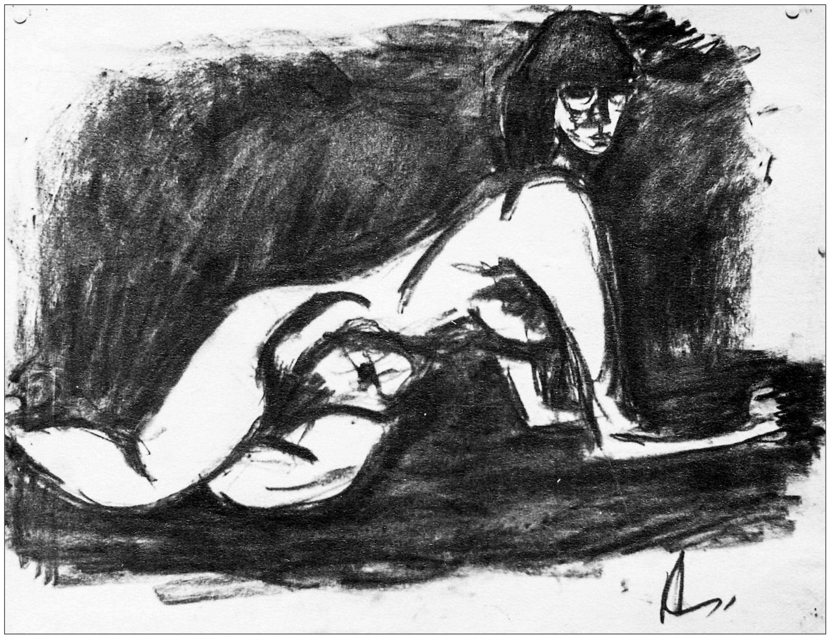
Nude, 1956–8. Ink on paper.



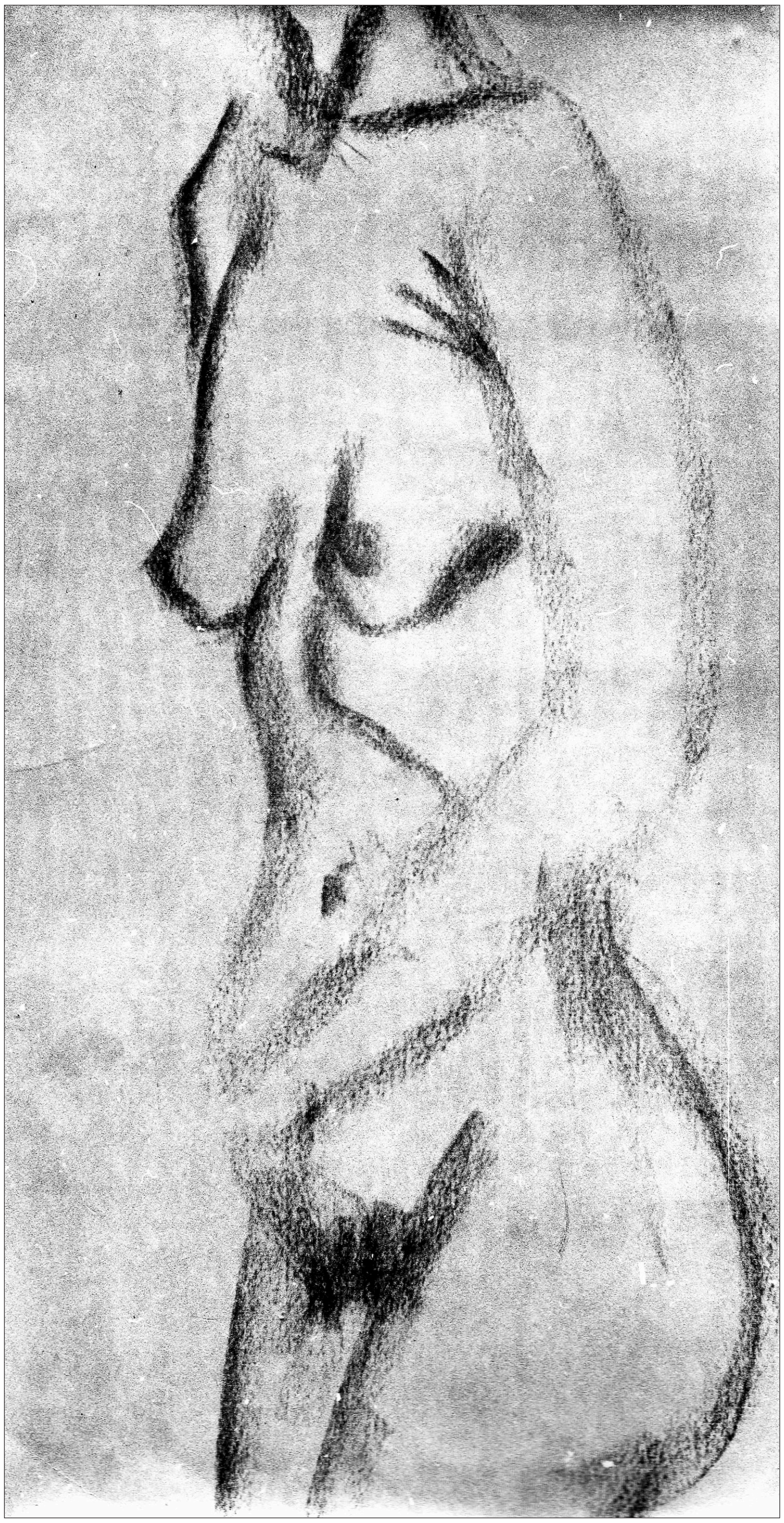
Nude, 1956–8. Charcoal on paper, 21.5 x 16.25 in.



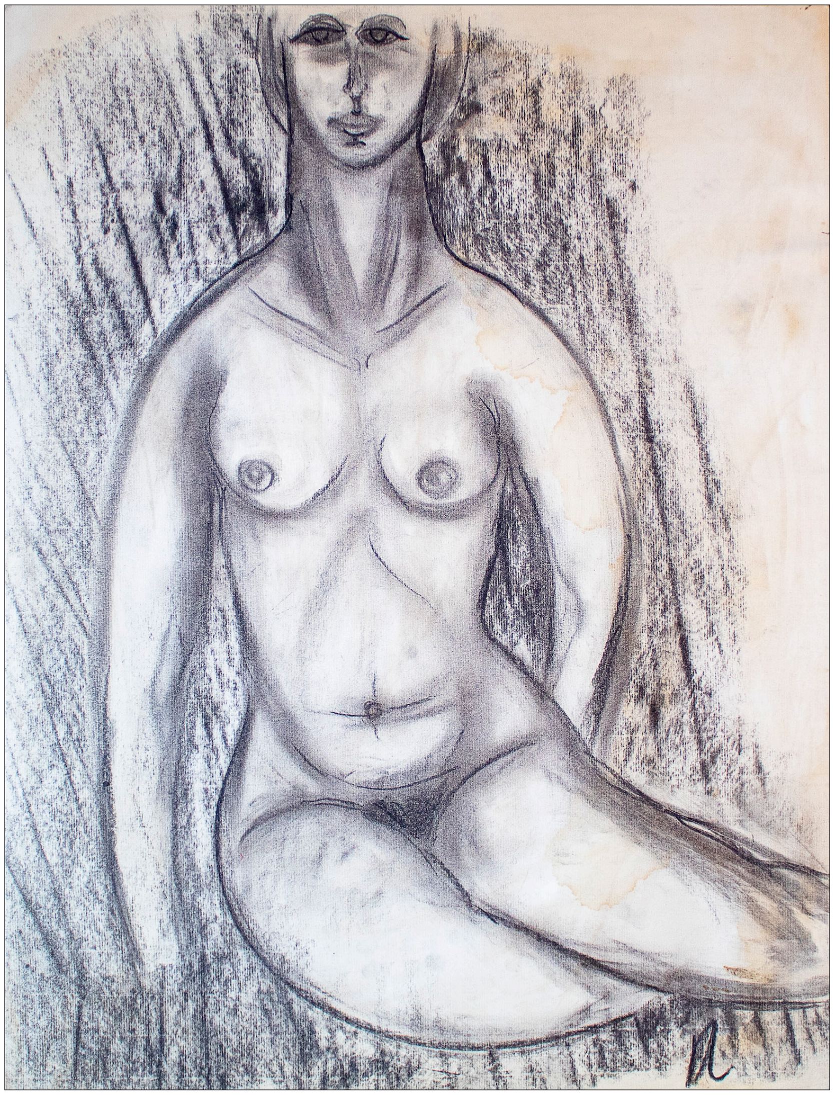
Nude, 1956–8. Charcoal, 21.5 x 16.25 in.



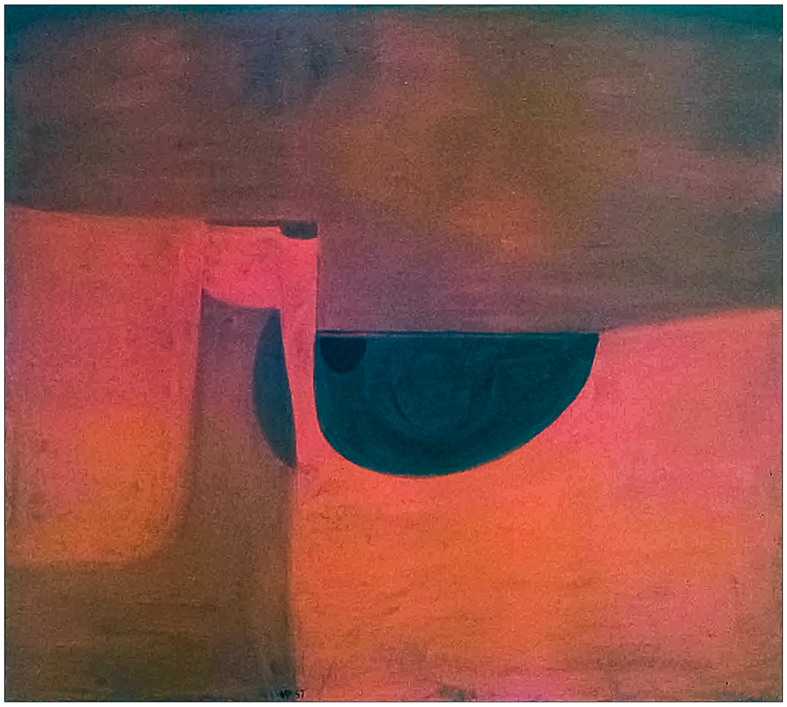
Nude, 1956–8. Charcoal on paper.



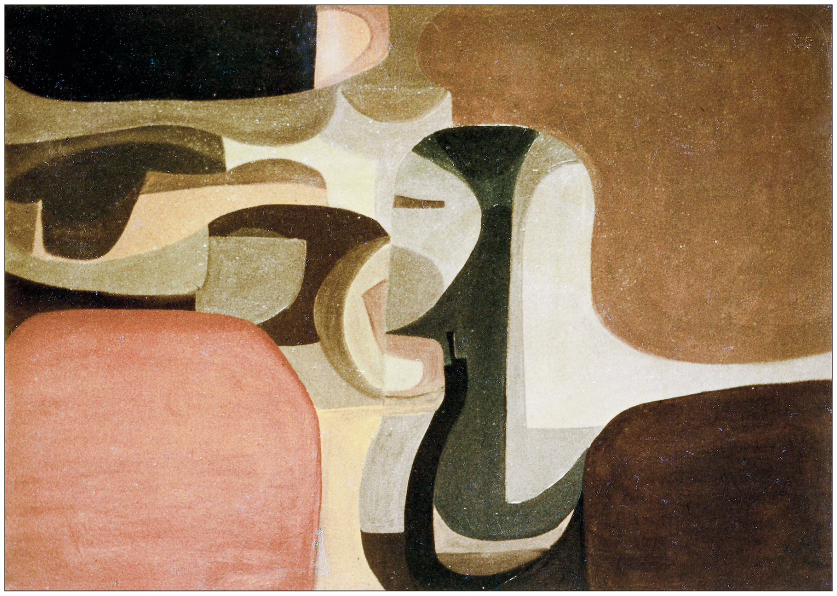
Nude, 1956–8. Charcoal on paper.



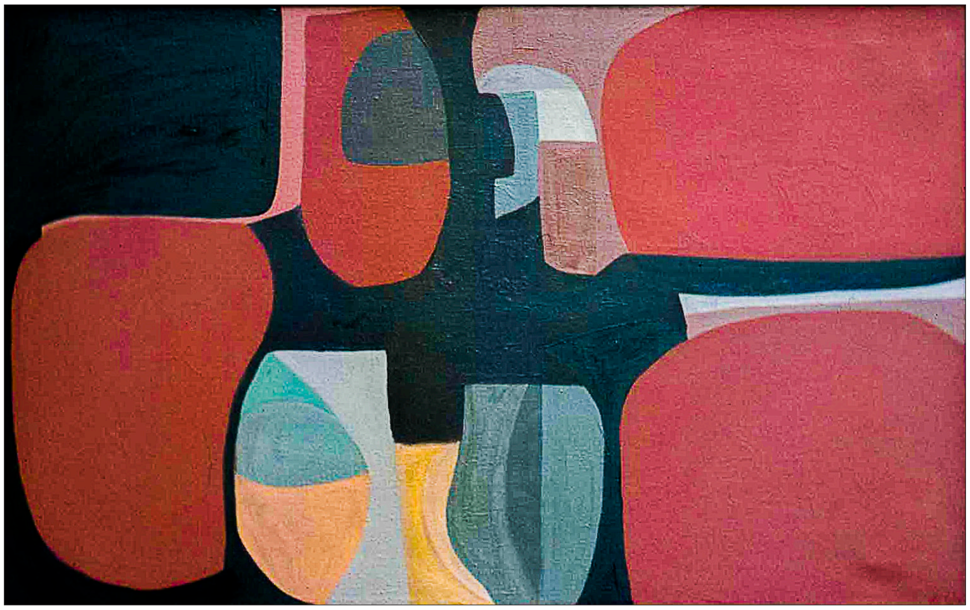
Nude, 1956–8. Charcoal on paper, 21.5 x 16.25 in.



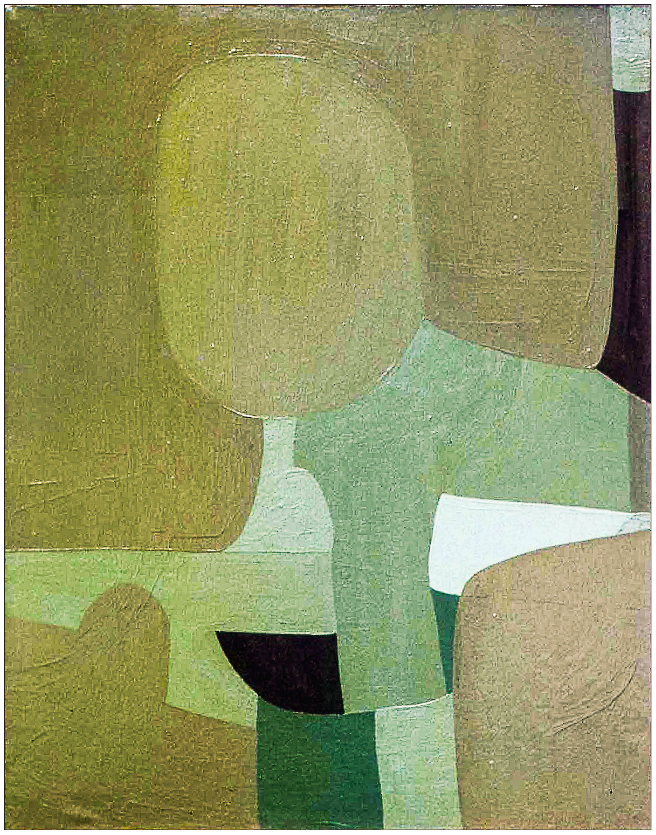
Untitled, 1957. Oil on canvas.



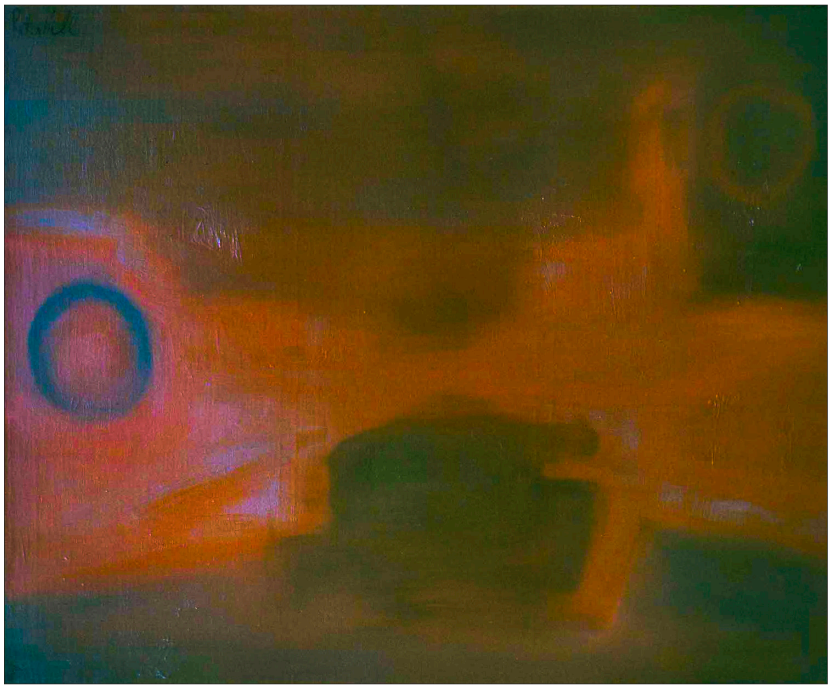
Untitled, 1956–8. Oil.



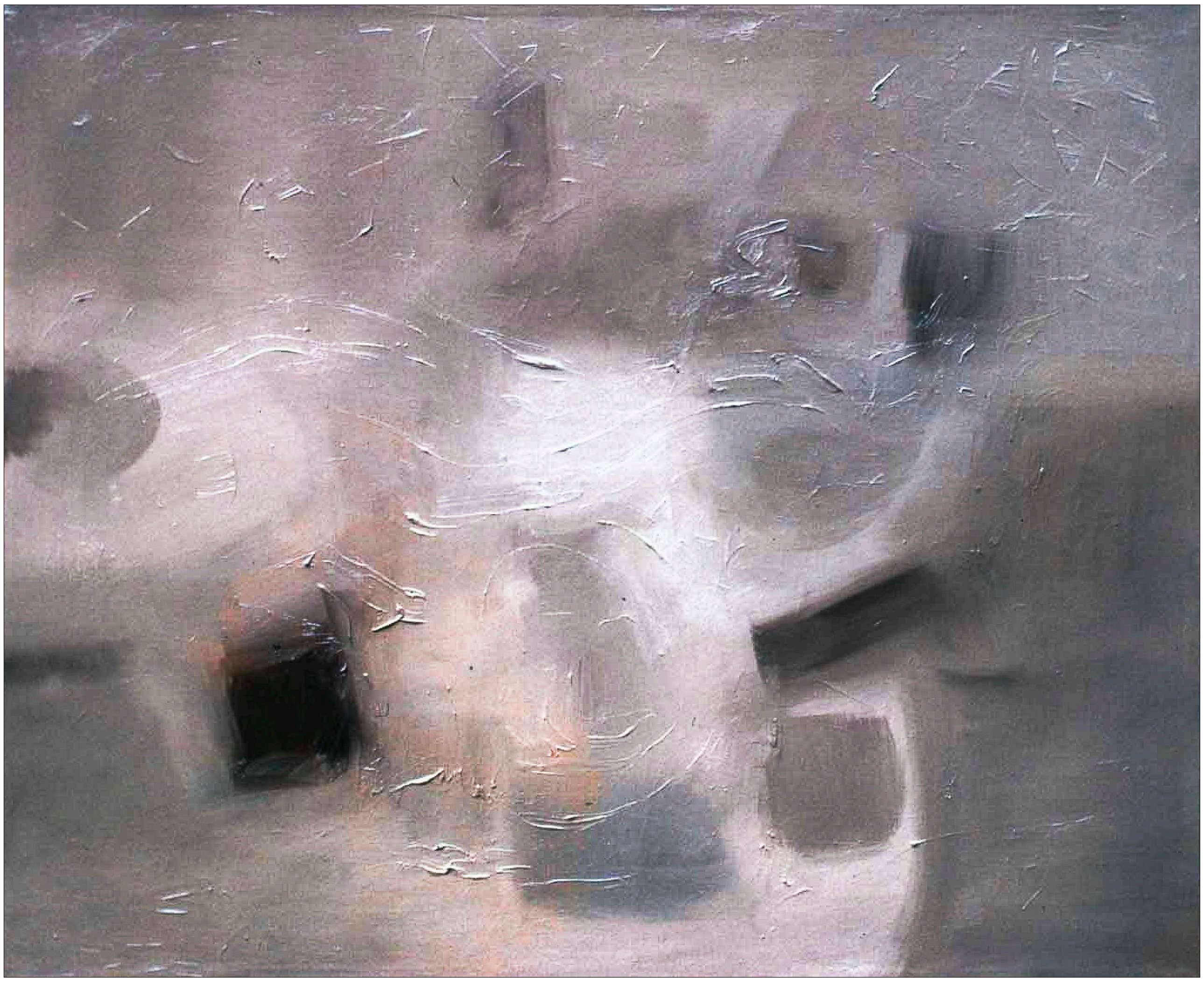
Untitled, 1956–8. Oil on canvas.
Possibly gifted to Lyman Hill, Jr., the artist's brother.



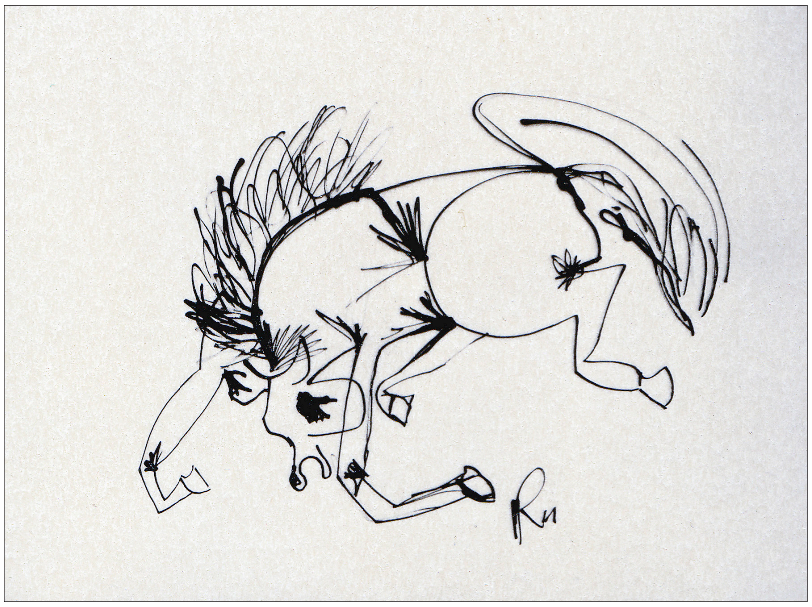
Untitled, 1956–8. Oil on canvas.



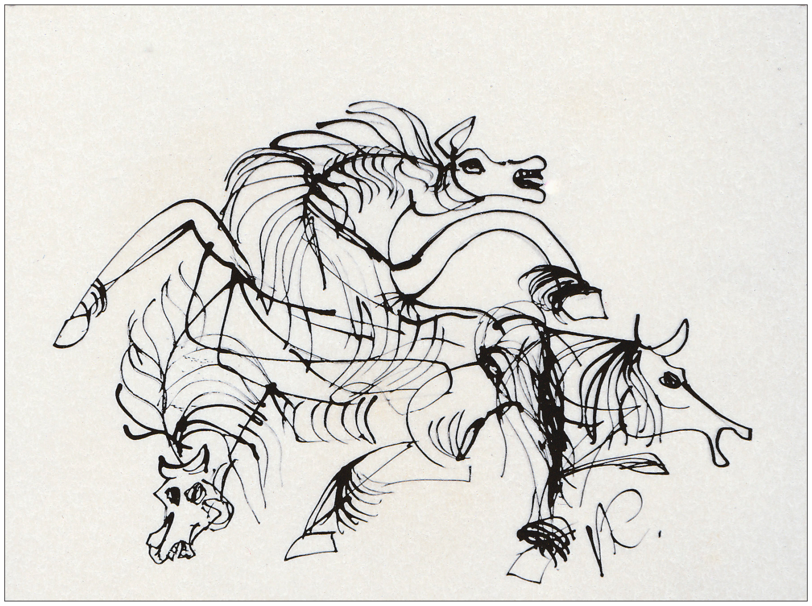
Untitled, 1956–8. Oil on canvas.



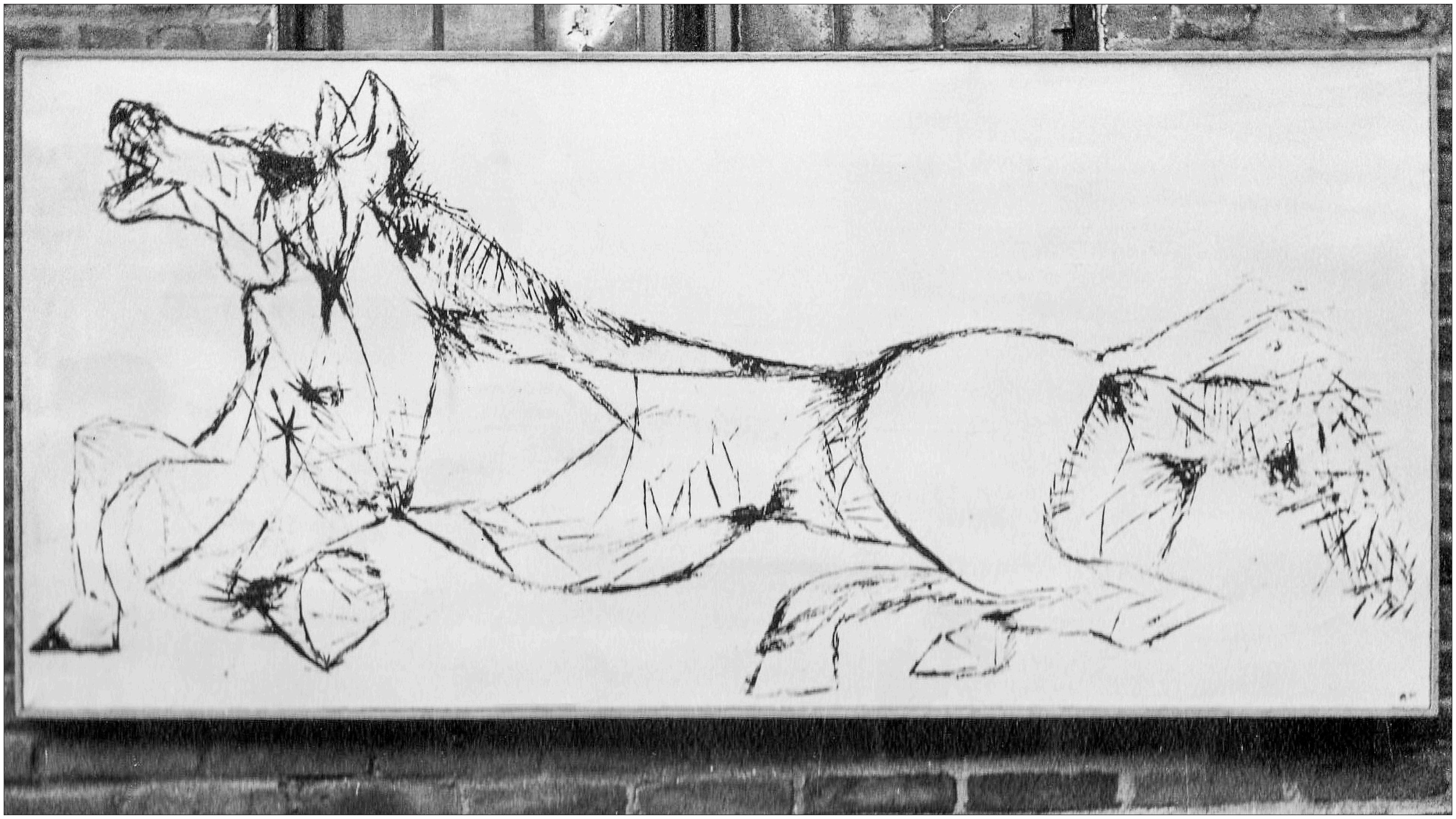
Untitled, 1956–8.
Oil on canvas.



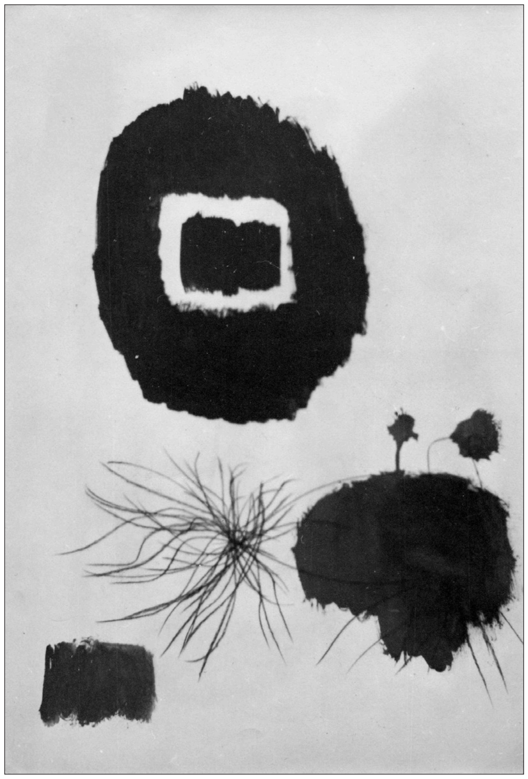
Suffering Horse, 1956–8. Ink on paper.



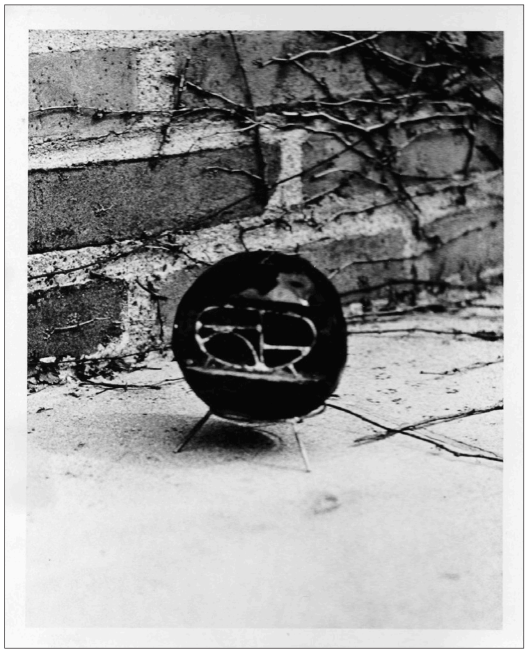
Suffering Horses, 1956–8. Ink on paper.



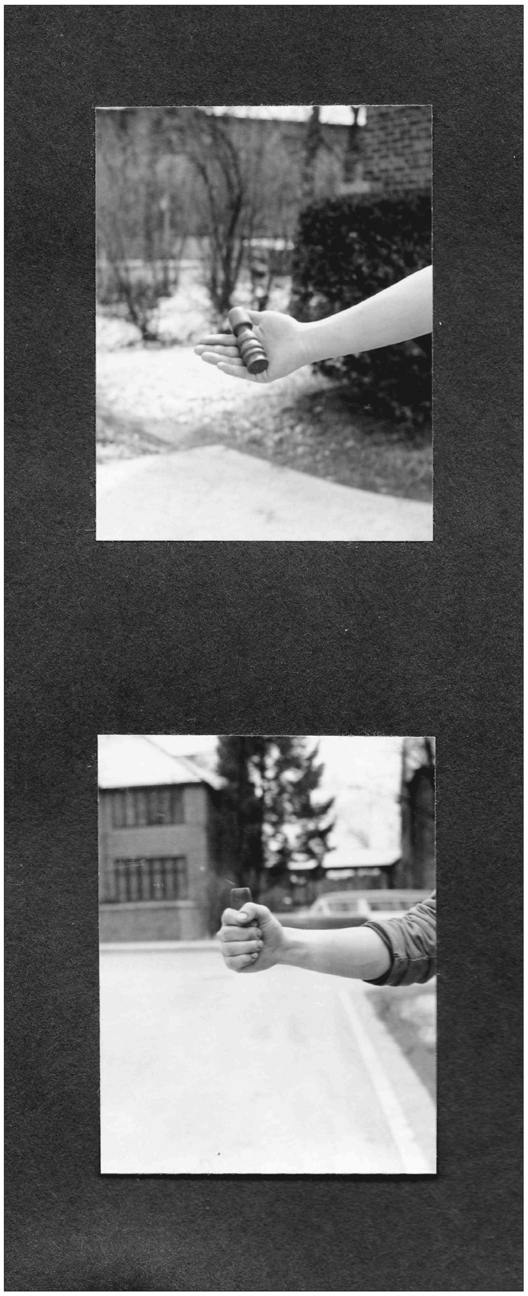
Large Horse, 1956–8.



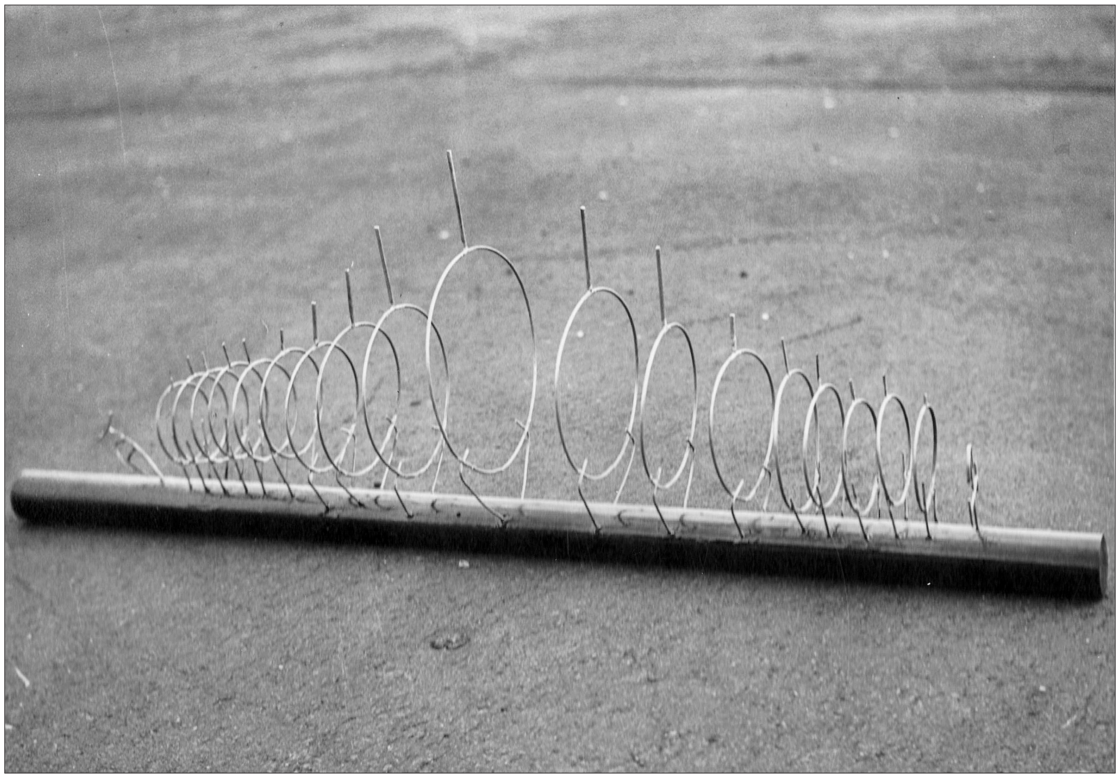
Abstraction, 1956–8. Ink on paper.



Untitled, 1956–8. Clay and steel.
Collection of Jonathan & Maureen Hill.



Clay sculpture, 1956–8.

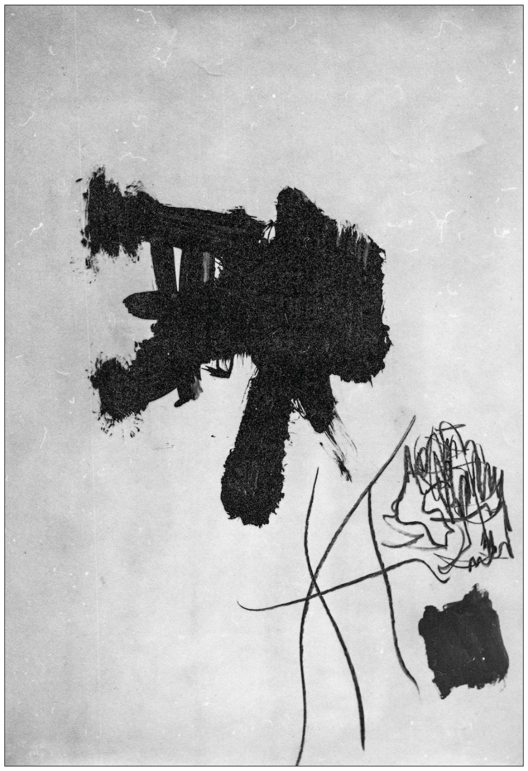


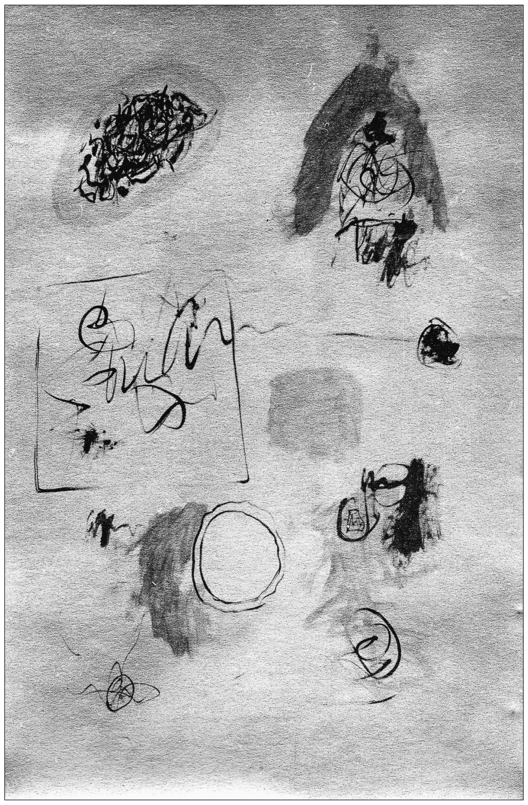
Untitled, 1956–8. Stainless steel.

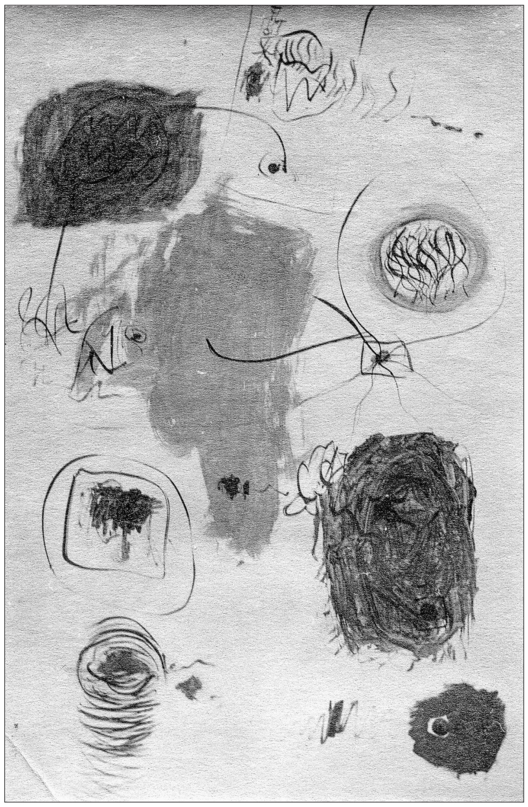
Abstract Studies, 1956–8

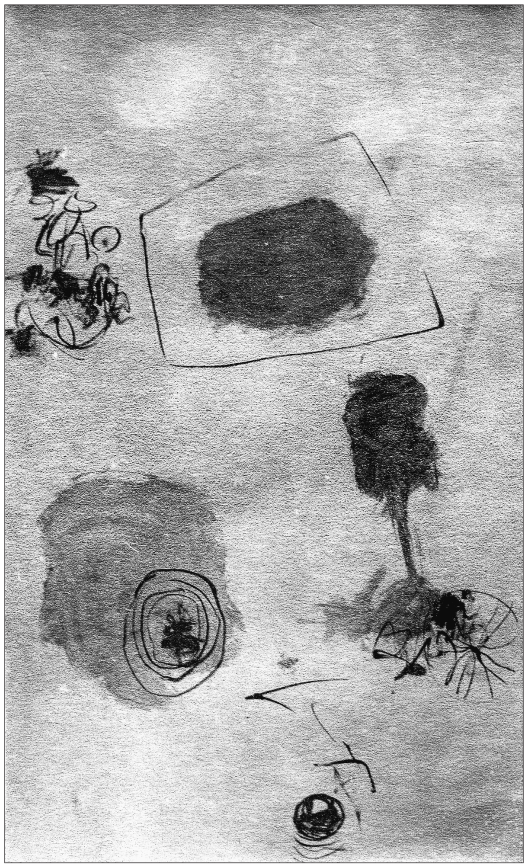
Below: Ink, charcoal, graphite on paper.

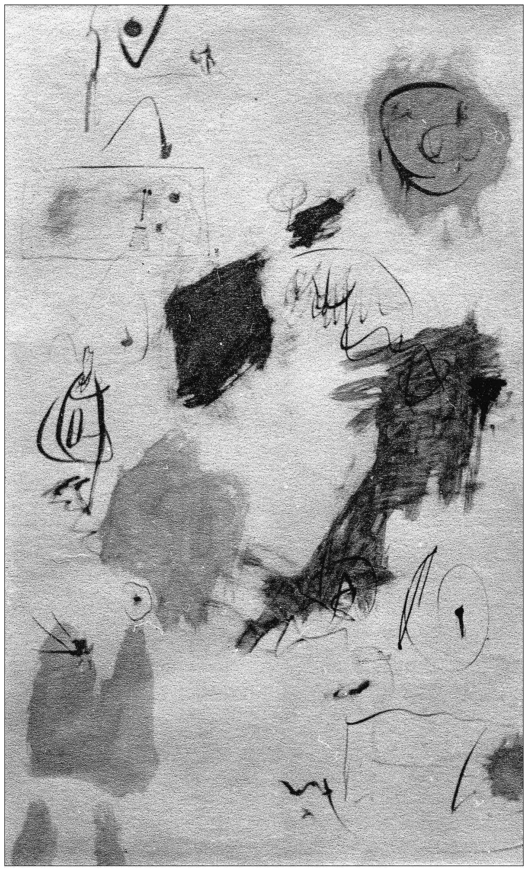
Opposite: Ink on paper.

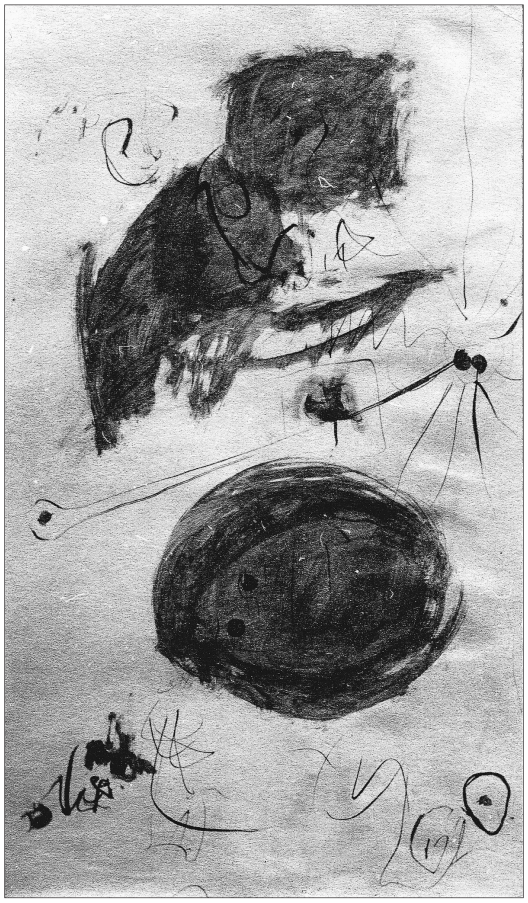


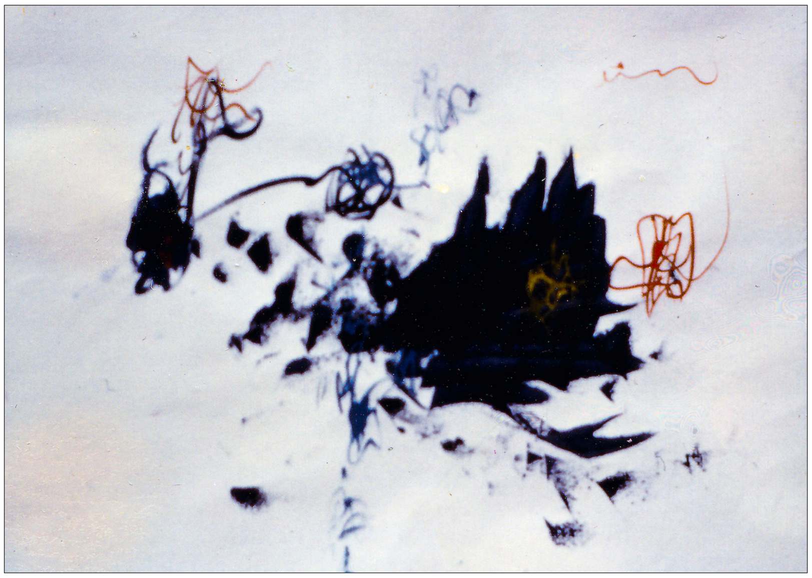


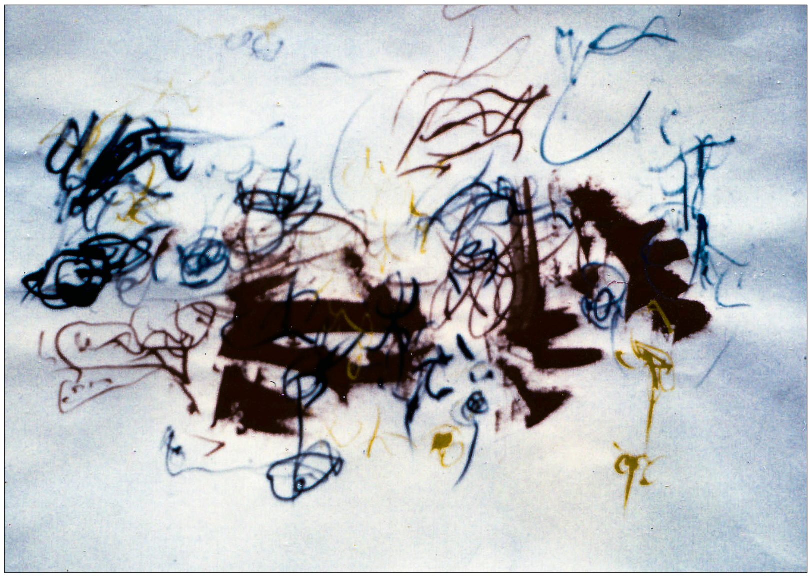


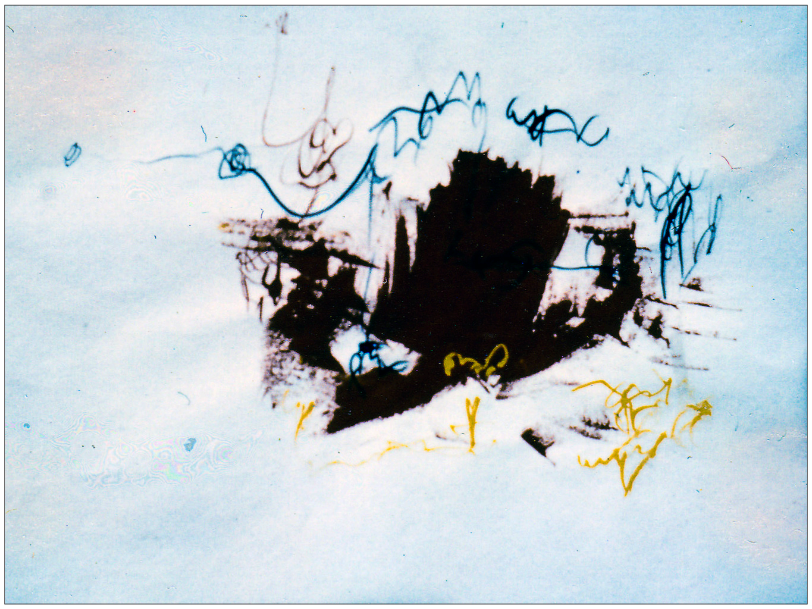


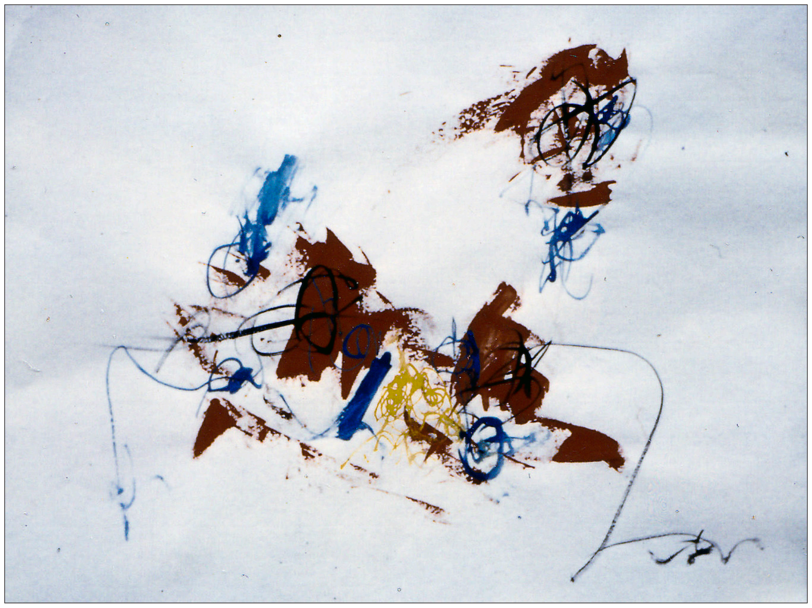


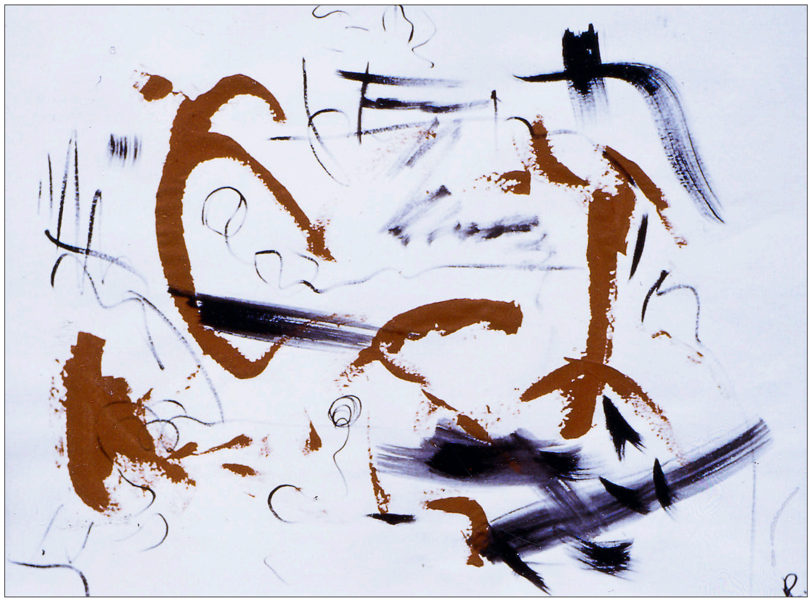


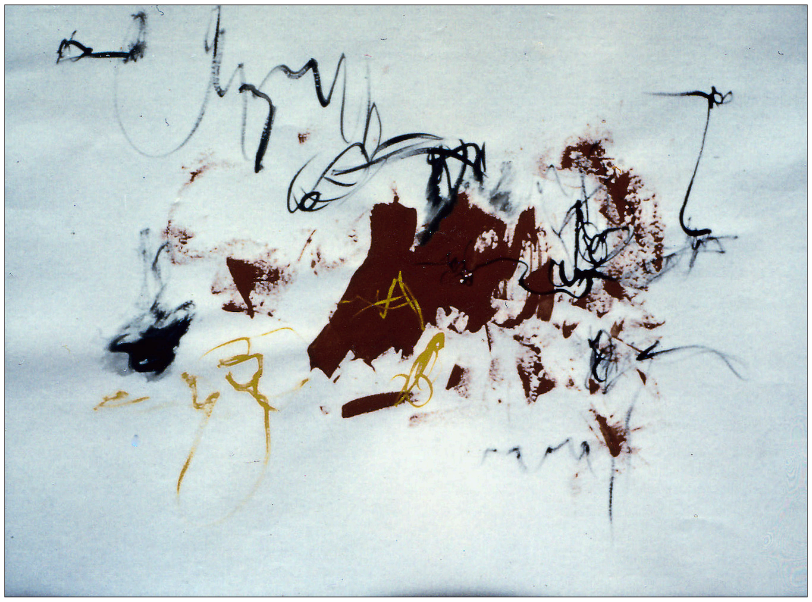


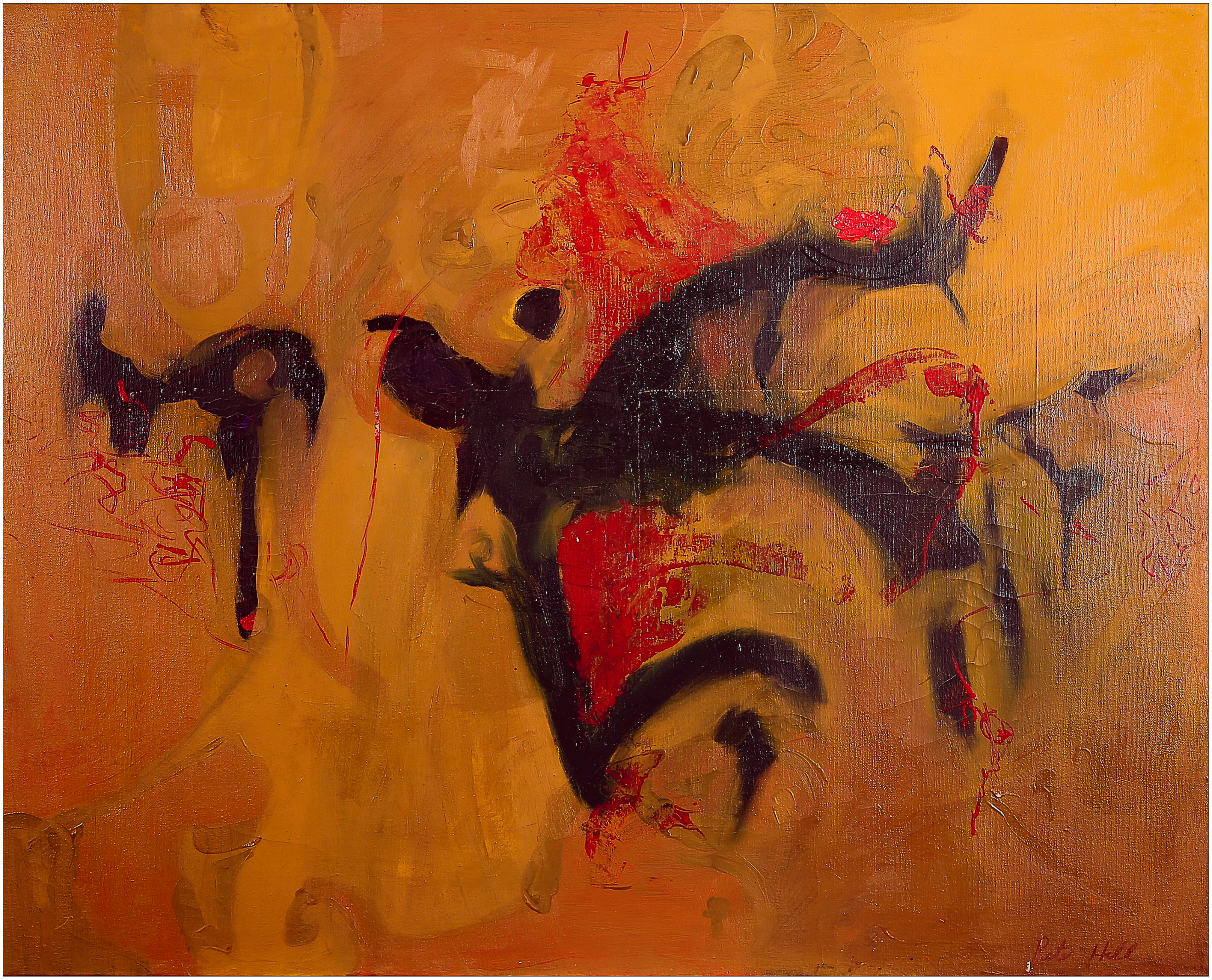






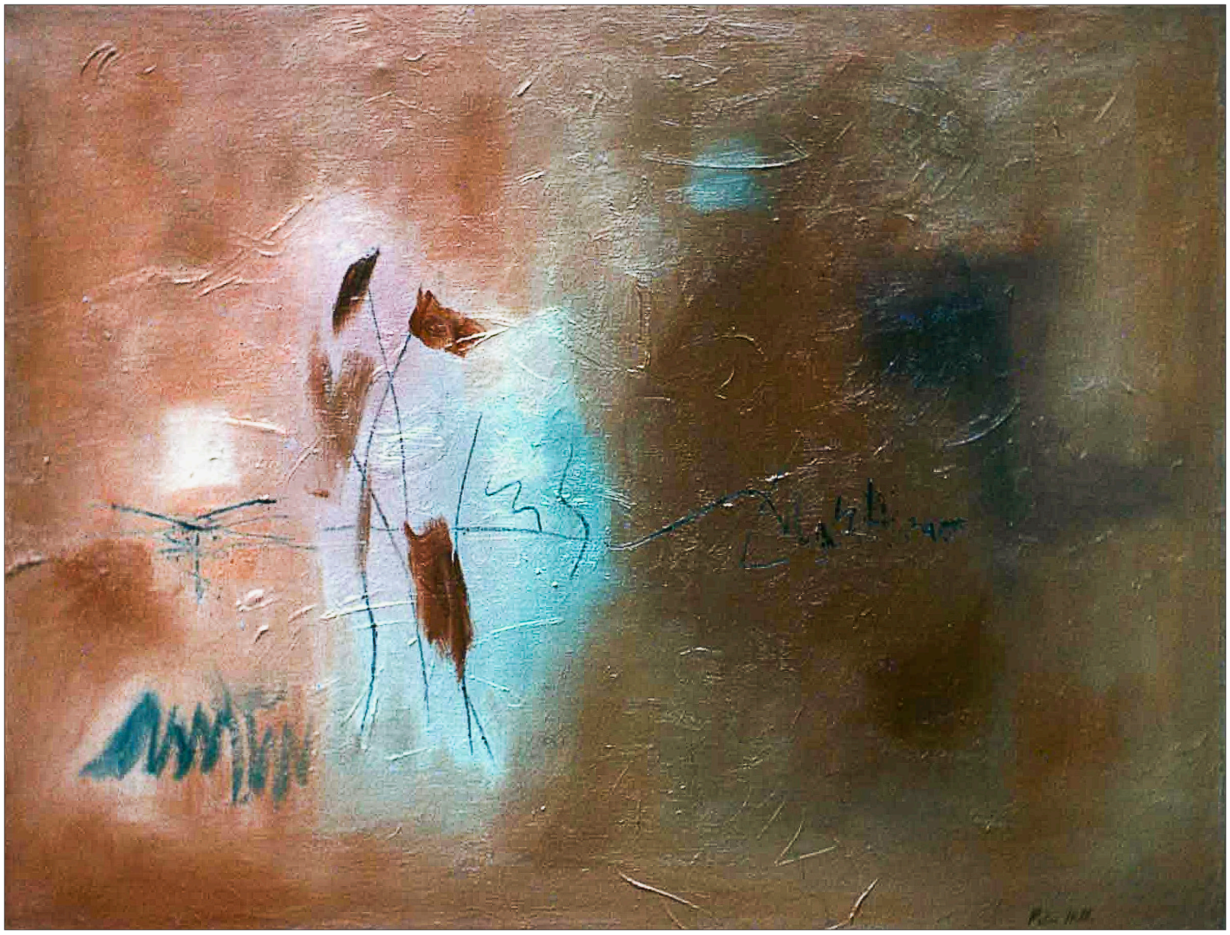




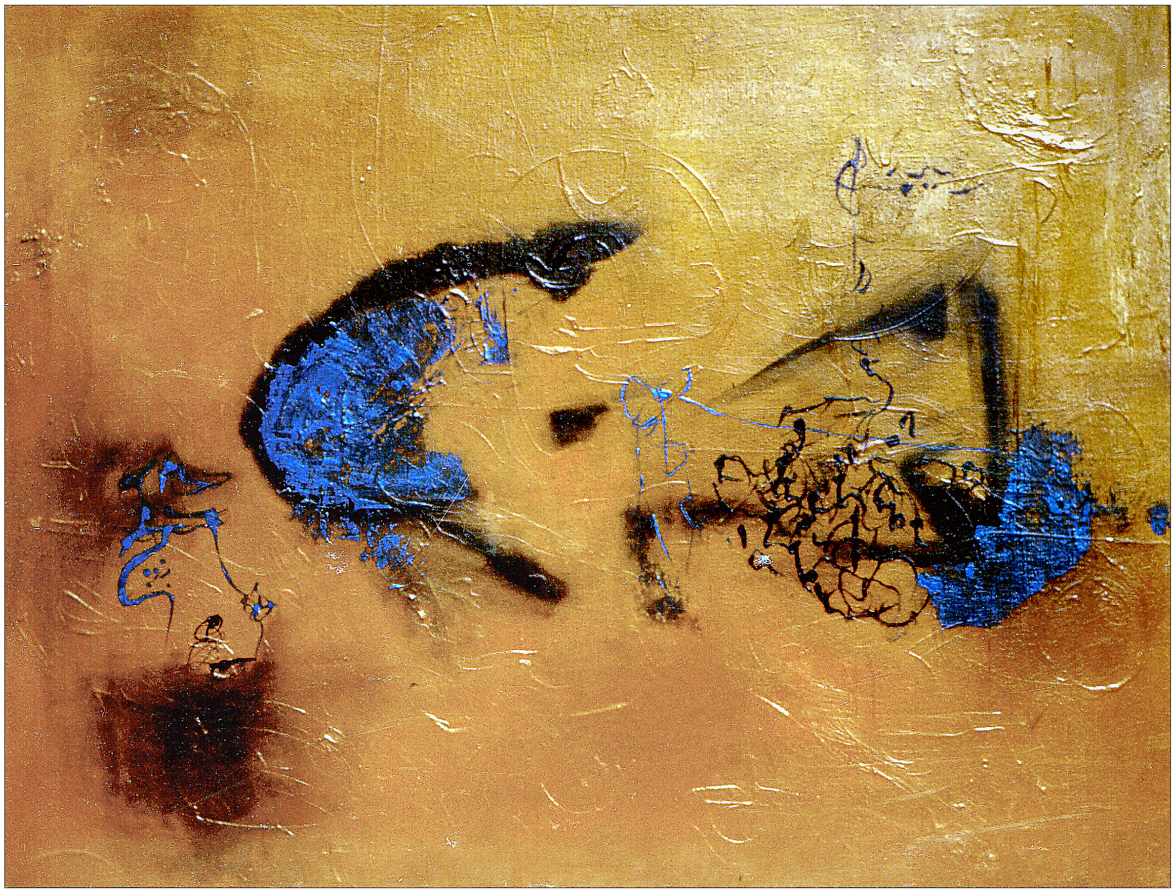


Untitled

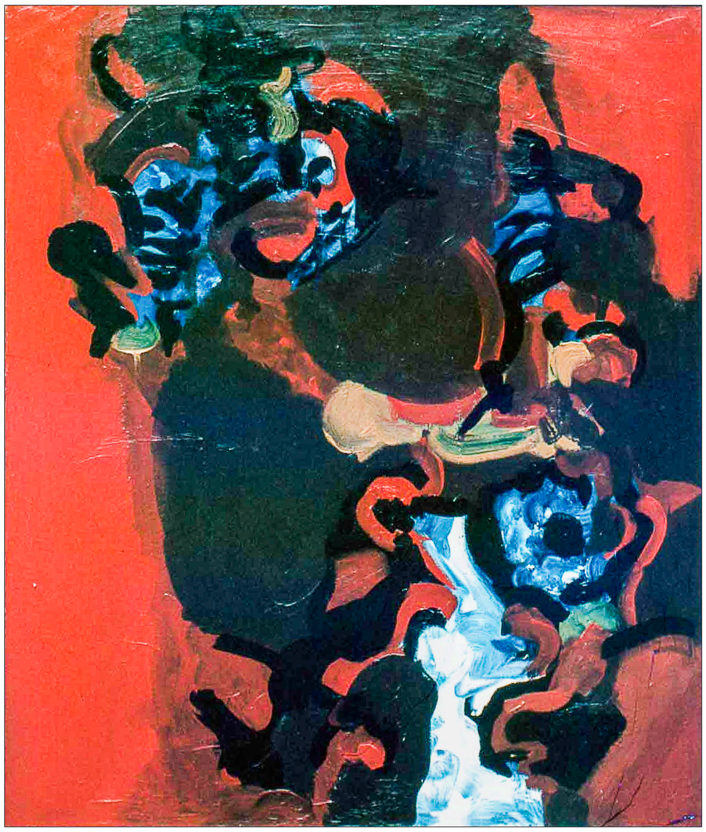
1957–8. Oil on canvas, 34 x 42 in.
Collection of Jonathan and Maureen Hill.



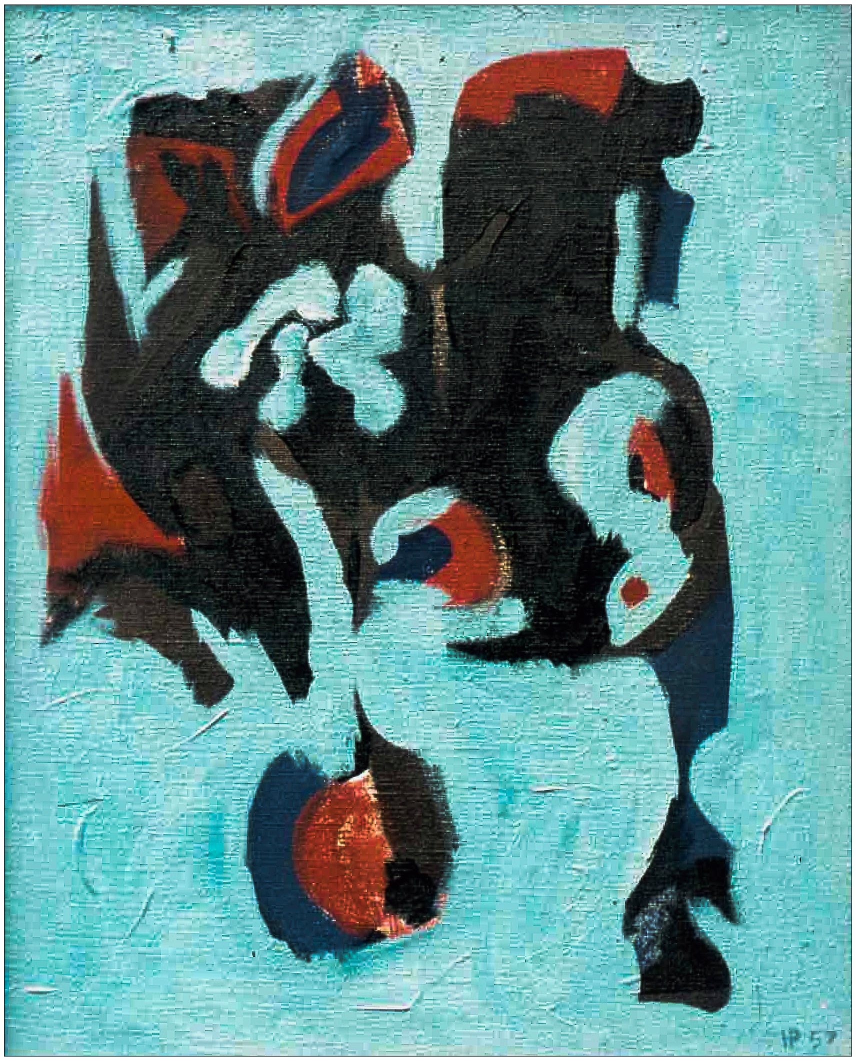
Untitled, 1956–8. Oil on canvas.



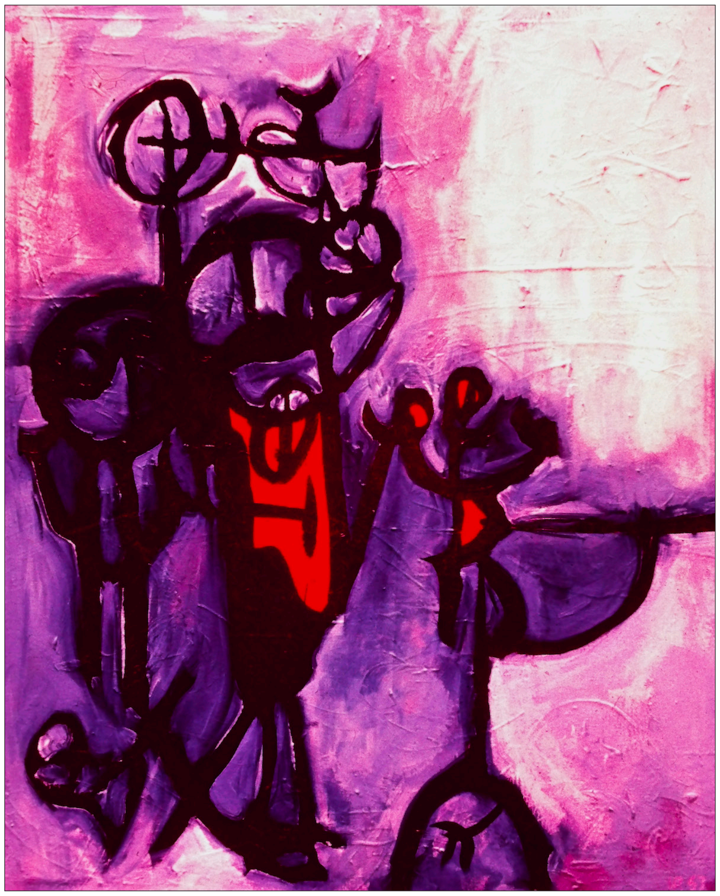
Untitled, 1956–8. Oil on canvas.



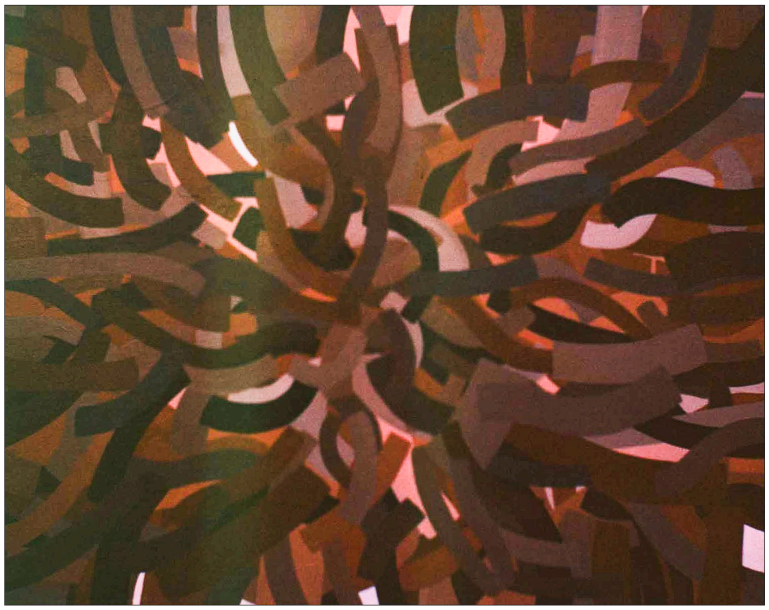
Untitled, 1957. Oil on canvas. Gifted to Robert Bergh.



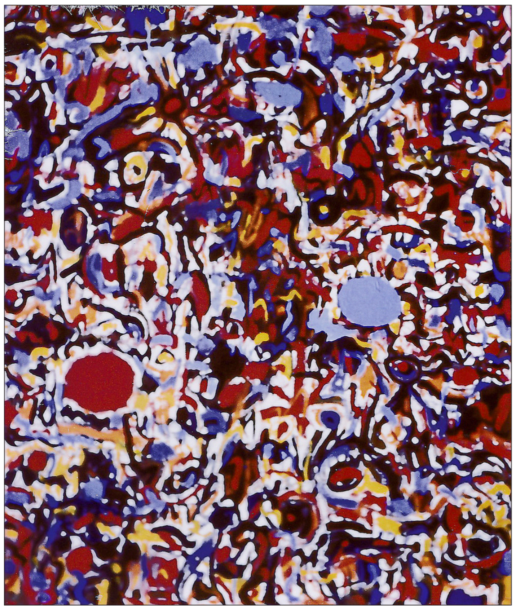
Untitled, 1957. Oil on canvas. Gifted to Richard Leach.



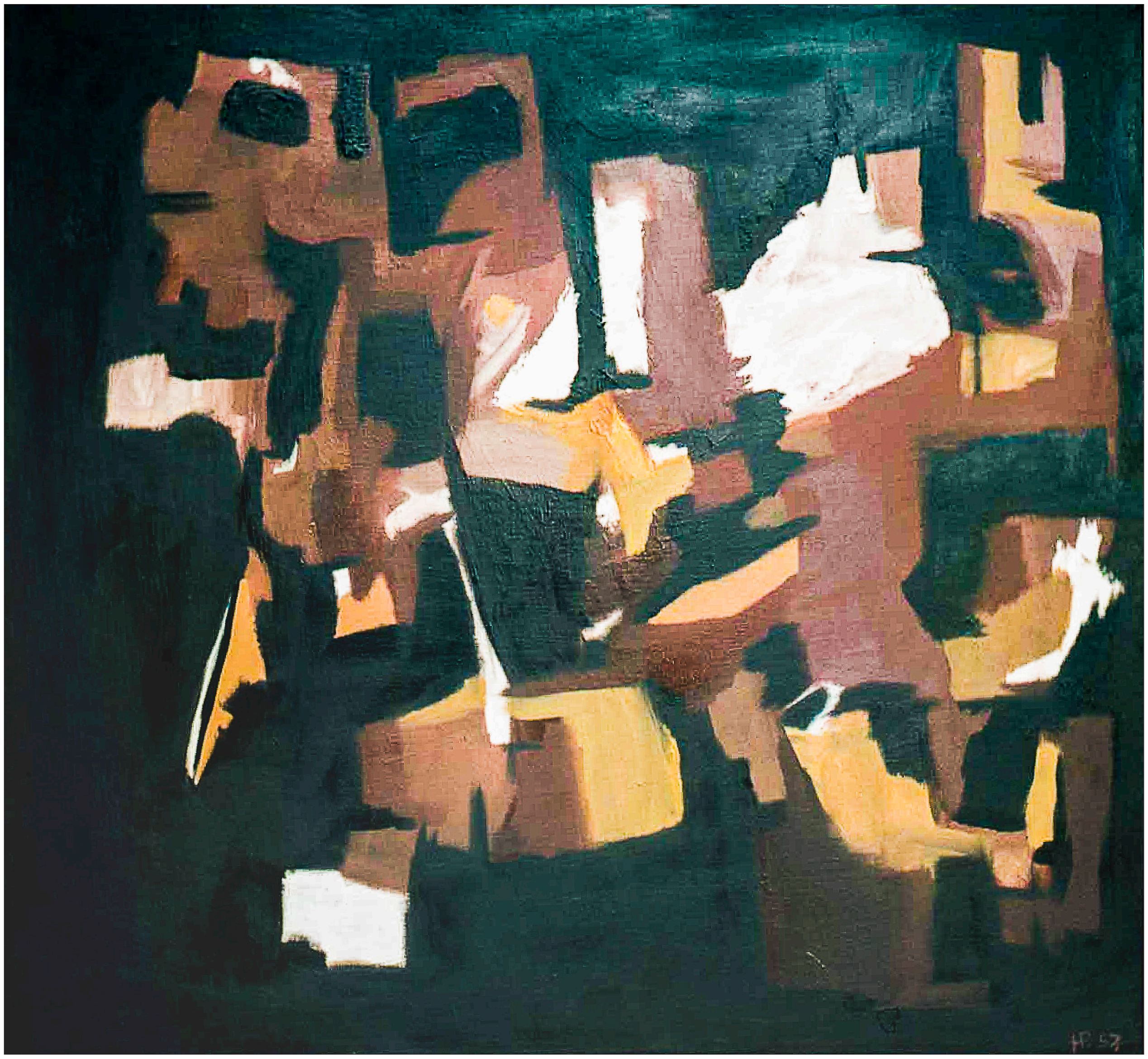
Untitled, 1957. Oil on canvas.



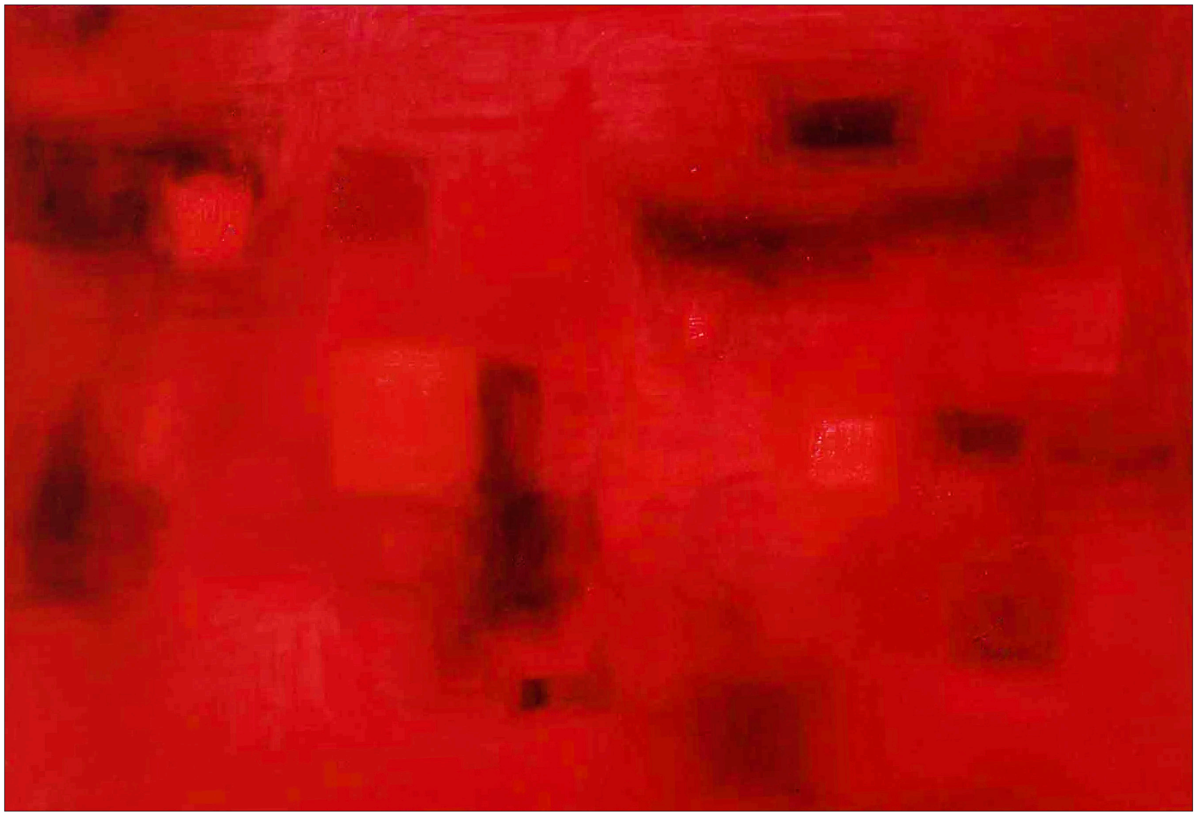
Untitled, 1956–8.



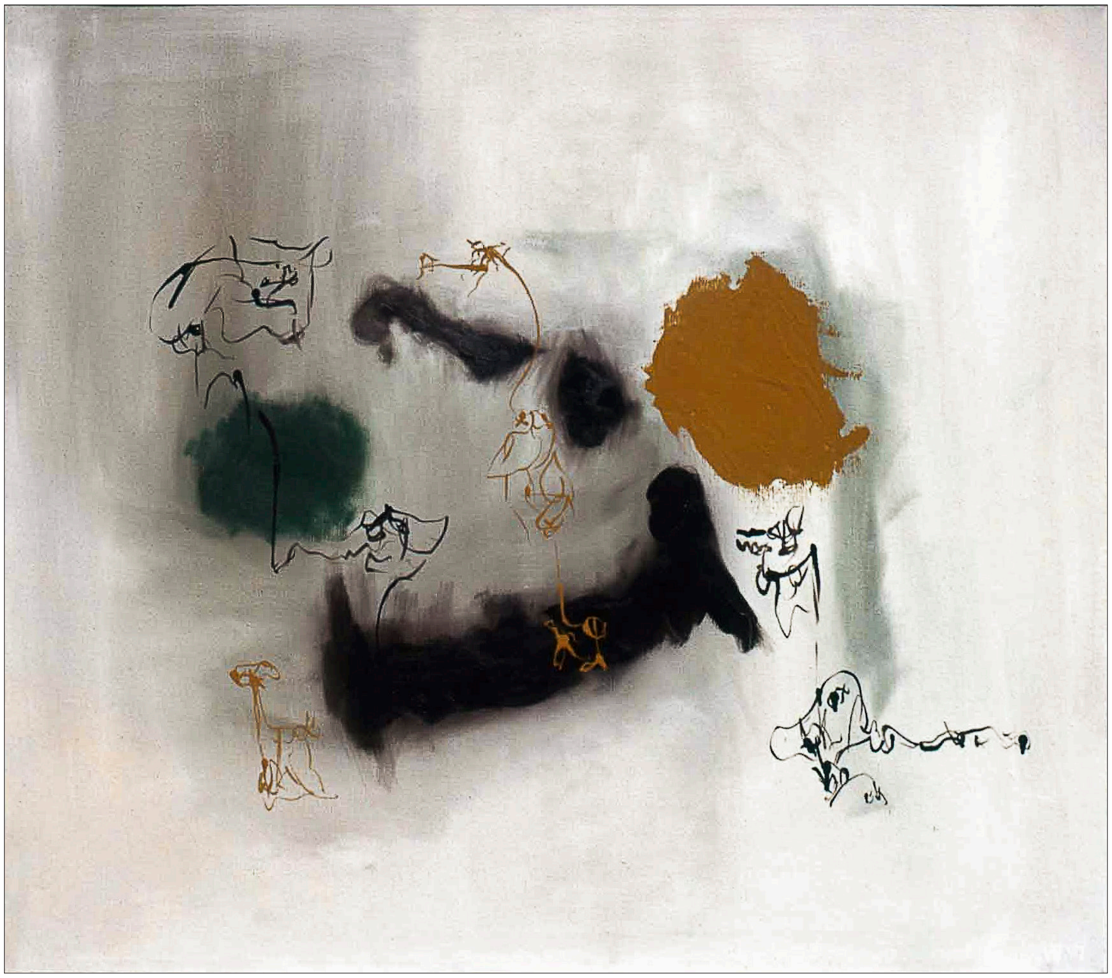
Untitled, 1956–8.



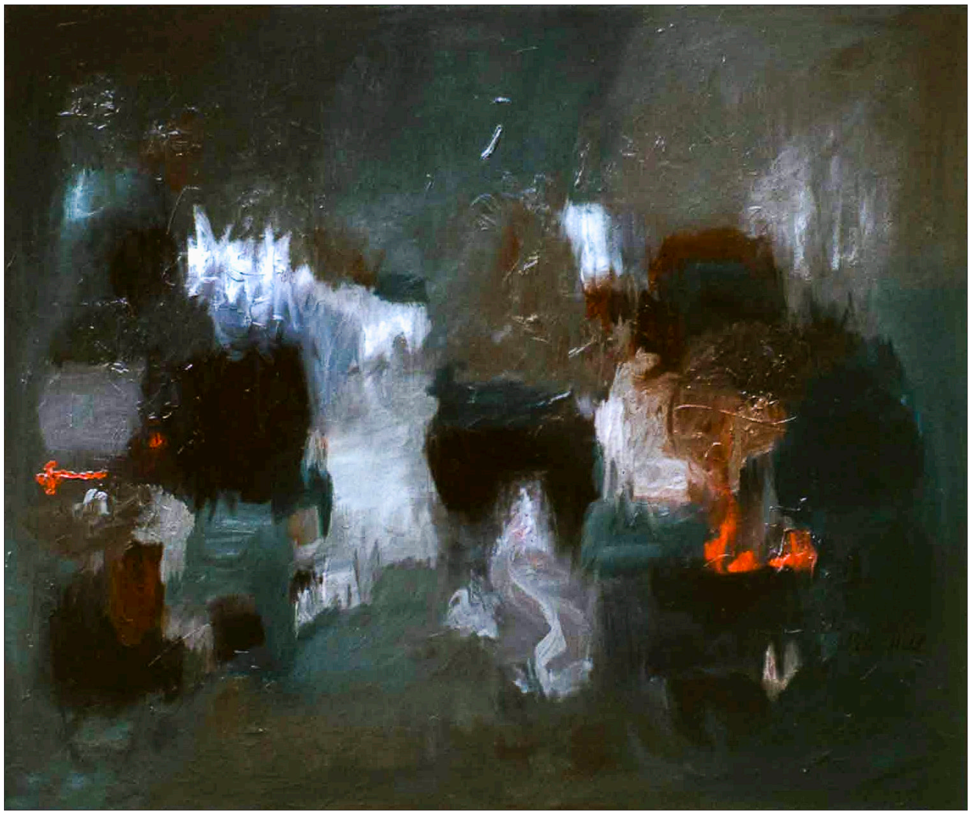
Untitled, 1957. Oil on canvas.



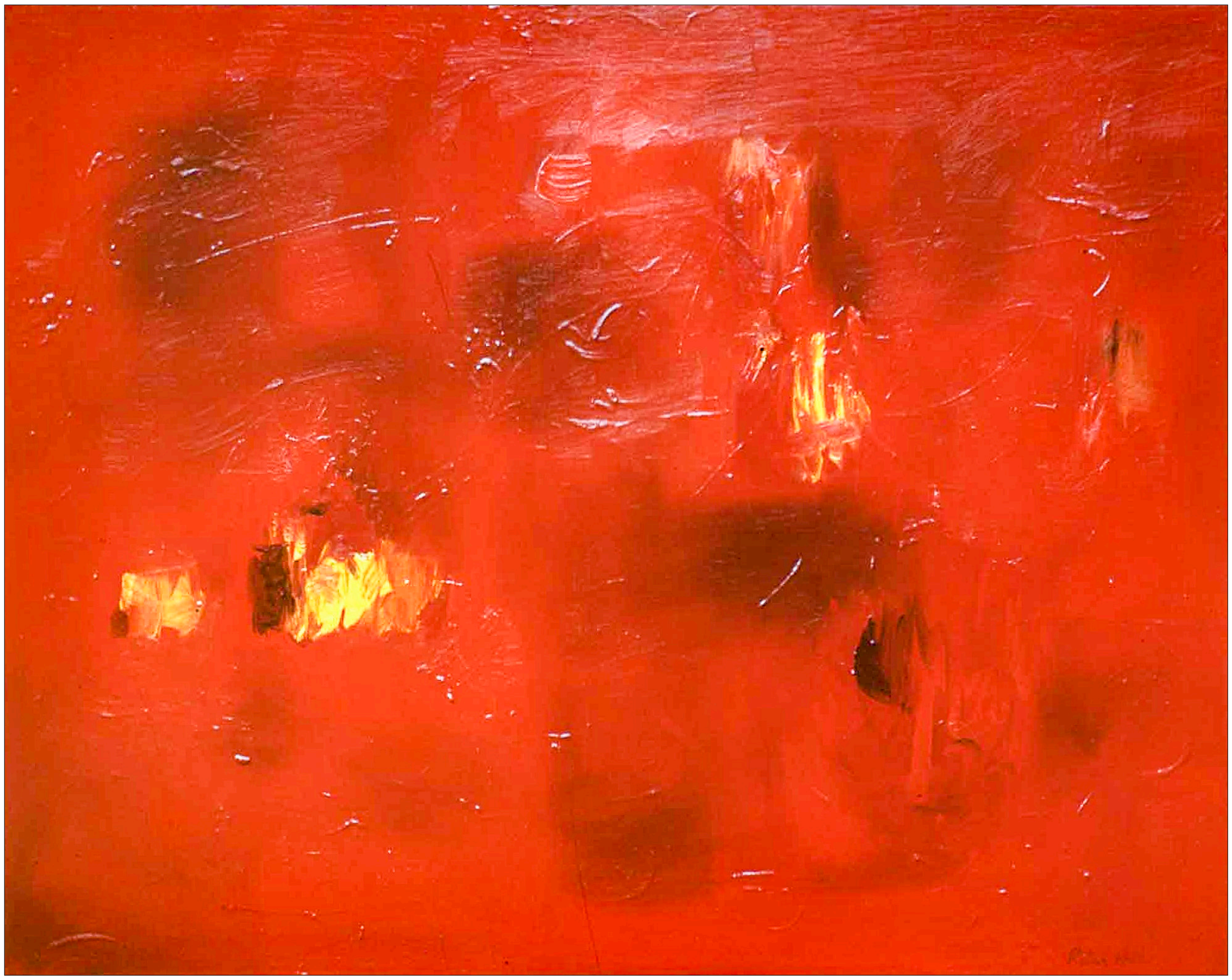
Untitled, 1957.
Oil on canvas, 36 x 48 in.
Gifted to Tom Wilson.



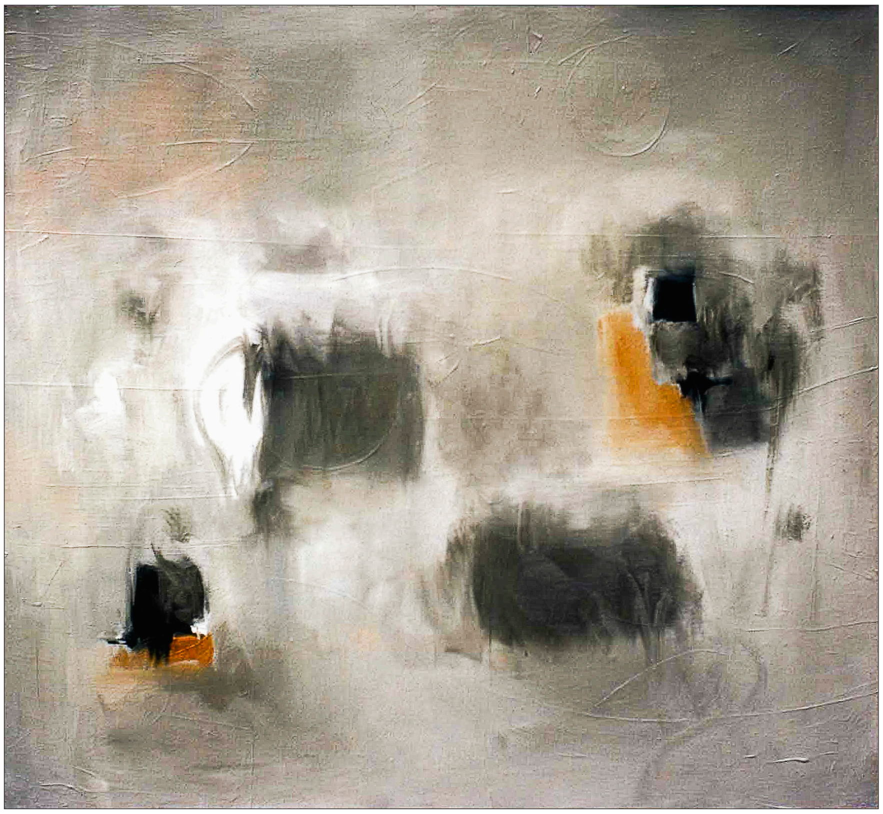
Untitled, 1957. Oil on canvas.
Gifted to Roger Twedt.



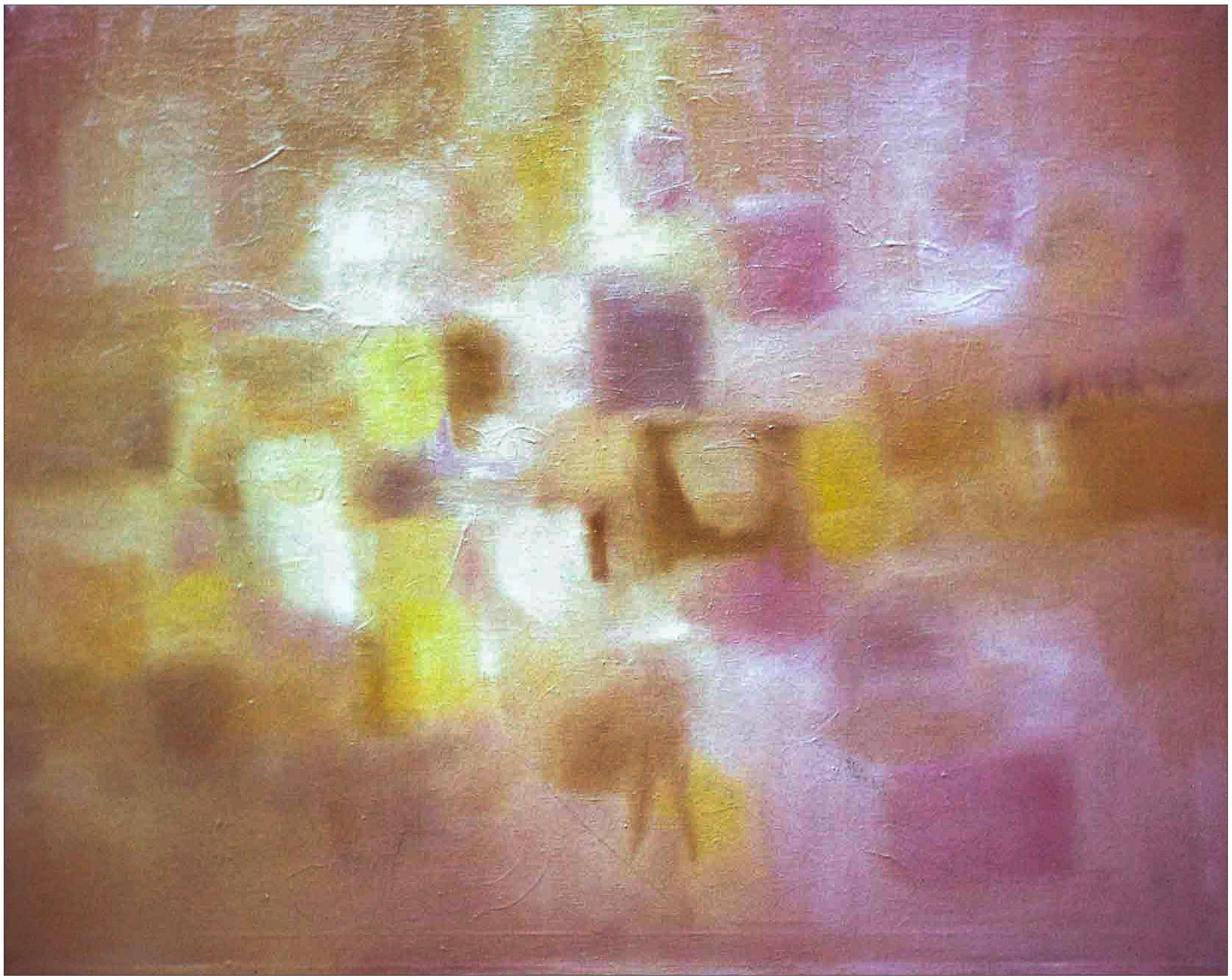
Untitled, 1958. Oil on canvas, 36 x 42 in.
Gifted to Jim Krieter.



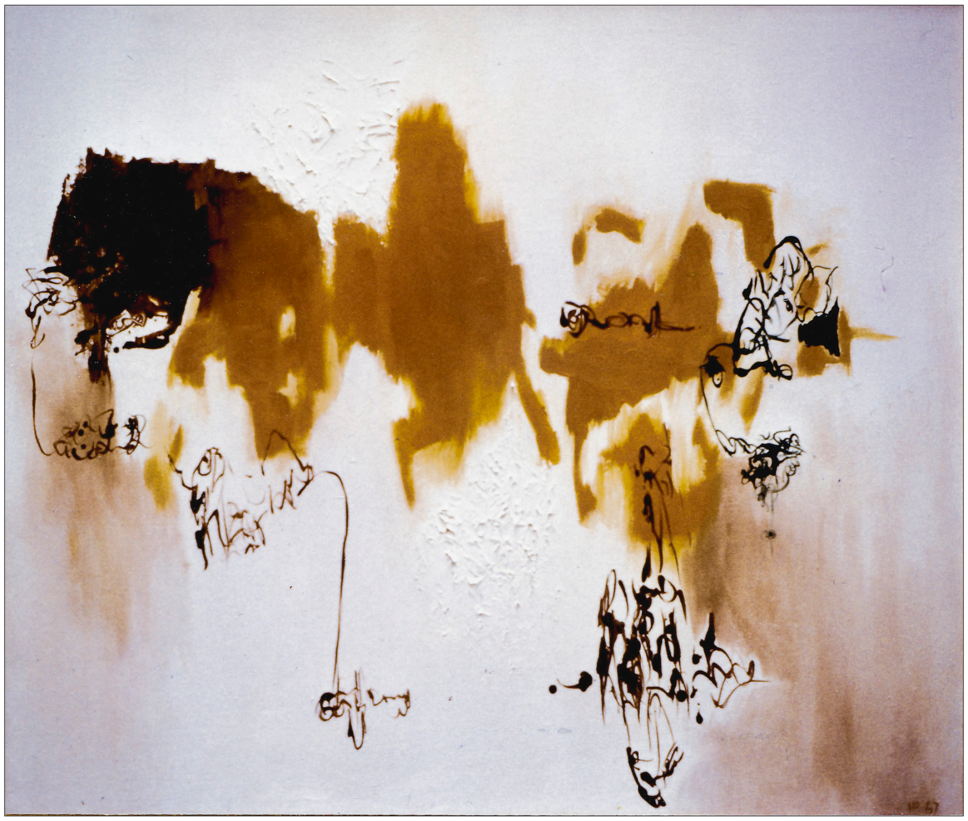
Untitled, 1958.
Oil on canvas, 42 x 48 in.
Gifted to Tom Wilson.



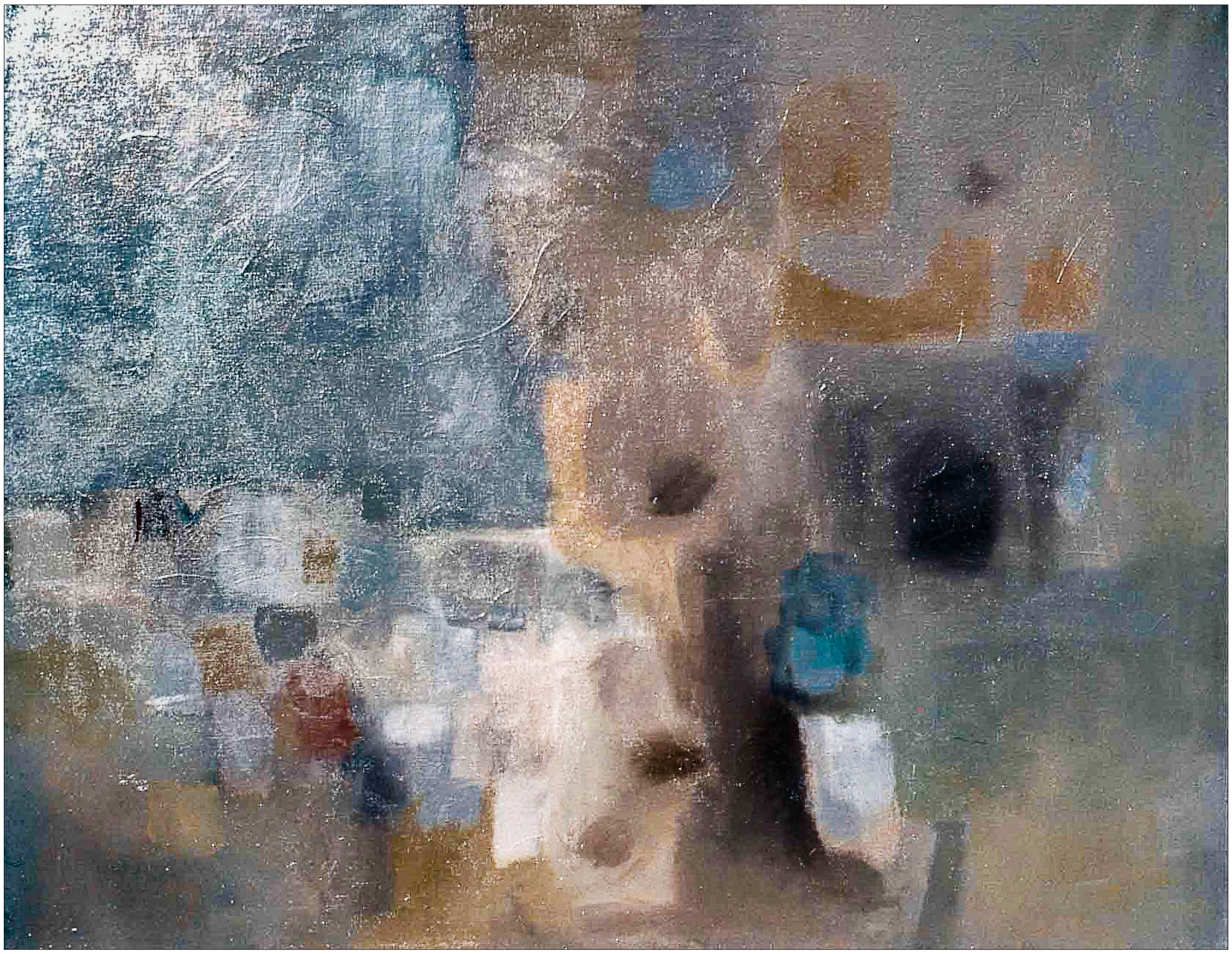
Untitled, 1958.
Oil on canvas, 48 x 48 in.
Gifted to Vernon Bobbitt.



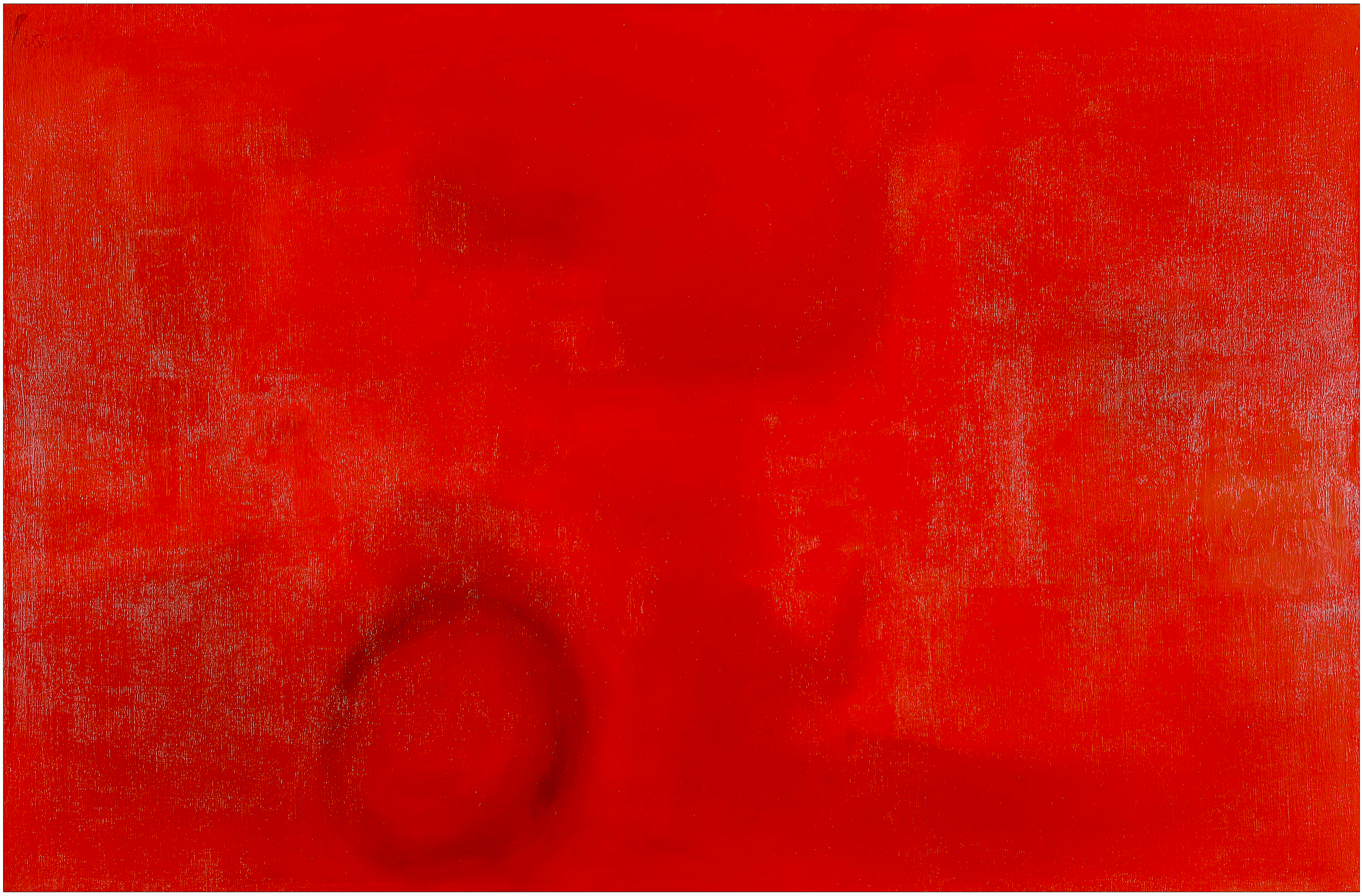
Untitled, 1958.
Oil on canvas, 60 x 78 in.
Gifted to Robert Austin.



Untitled, 1957. Oil on canvas.

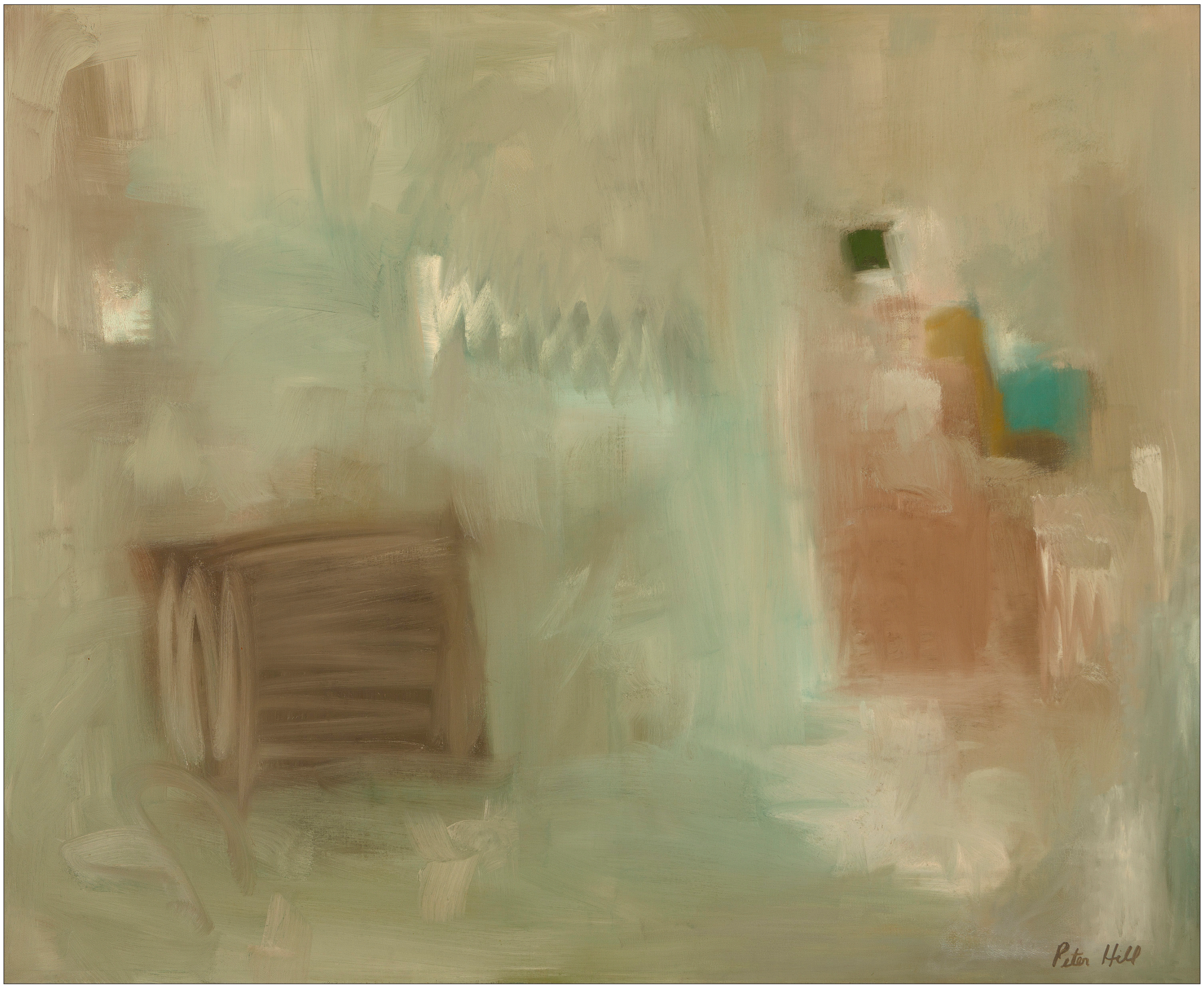


Untitled, 1956–8.
Oil on canvas, 60 x 72 in.



Untitled

1958. Oil on canvas, 36 x 54 in.
Collection of Meghan Freeman and Evan Porter.



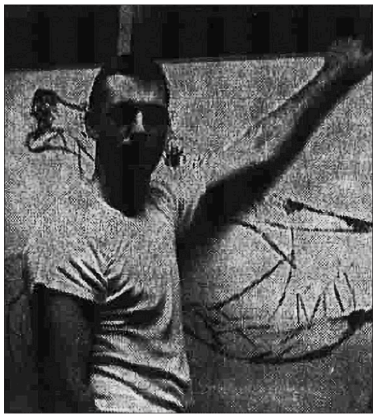
Untitled

1958. Oil on canvas, 36 x 42 in.
Collection of Peter Stevenson.

Albion Pleiad, February 28, 1958

Stockwell Exhibit To Feature Work Of Hill, '56 Grad

The March art exhibition, March 2 to 21, at the Stockwell Memorial library gallery will feature the paintings and drawings of Peter Hill, '56, as one of the four-part exhibit.



Peter Hill standing in front of *Horse* (see below right).

Hill's paintings and drawings compose part four. This exhibition was his thesis show at Cranbrook academy of art, Bloomfield Hills, where he received an MFA in painting in January. His work is described by [Vernon] Bobbitt as "colorful shapes of fantasy in the non-figurative idiom."

The exhibition room is open free of charge to the public Monday through Friday, 9-12 a.m., 2-4 p.m.; Saturday, 9-12 a.m.; and Sunday 2:30–5 p.m.

Albion Pleiad, March 21, 1958

Blotches of Red, Yellow, Green—Just What Does It All Mean?

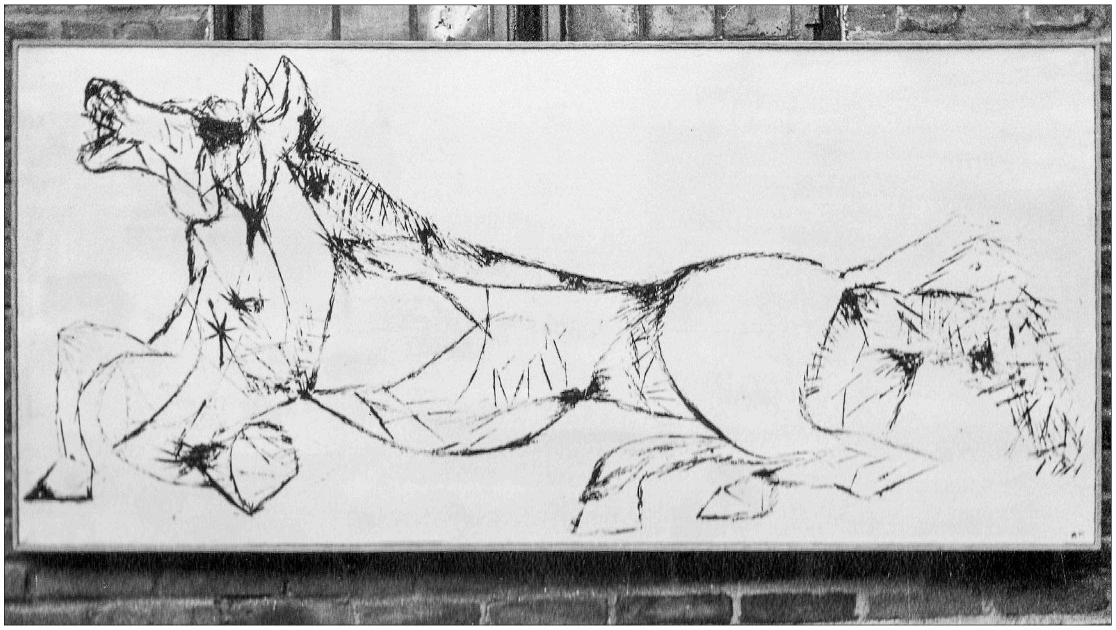
How would you like to have a big picture, a blue background with large patches of red, yellow, and green, hanging in your living room?

This is the type of thing you are likely to see in the controversial display of the modern art of Peter Hill, '56, a part of the March art exhibit on display at the Stockwell Memorial library through Sunday.

In his paintings Hill employs bright blues, reds, yellows; dull grays, browns; exacting contrast, barely distinguishable shadings, graceful lines and violent patches. These paintings cause considerable disagreement among the student body, for some enjoy the modern painting, and some don't.

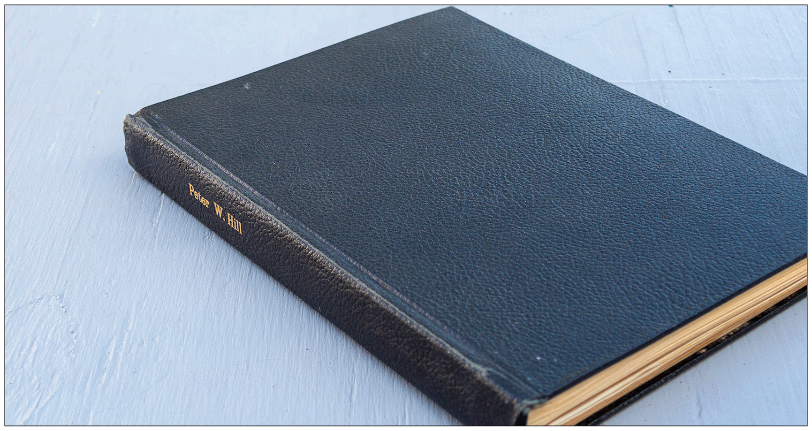
William Lipke, Grand Rapids senior, said, "The paintings don't say anything. They give you the same feeling as when you read a modern poem, but can't find the meaning because you get lost in the mechanics. Hill has the right balance of color, lines, etc., but there is too much mechanics."

Janet Noellert, Mt. Clemens senior, spoke in defense of the exhibit. "These paintings prove that there is something beautiful in art with only lines, curves, and colors. Subject matter isn't important," she said. "For some, art must have a subject or it isn't good. That is why many people don't like modern art."

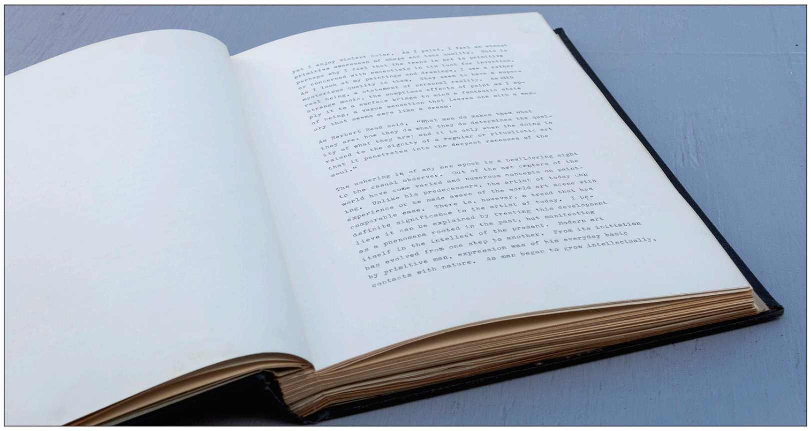


MFA Thesis Text

Pages 42 through 44 contain the text that introduces my father's thesis at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, which he submitted in January 1958 as partial fulfillment for his Master of Fine Arts degree.



The text of the thesis, which sets forth the artist's views on art and artmaking, is five pages long.

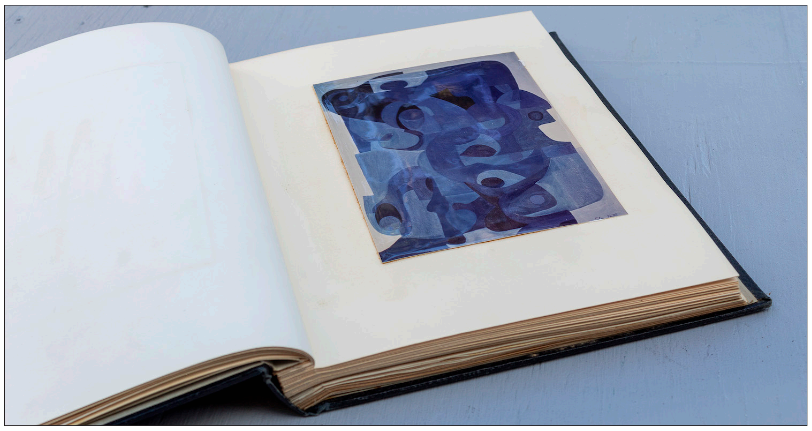


yet I enjoy violent color. As I paint, I feel an almost primitive awareness of shape and tone quality. This is perhaps why I feel that the trend in art is primitive or concerned with essentials in its lust for invention. As I look at my paintings and drawings, I see a rather mysterious quality in them. They seem to have a superreal being, a statement of personal reality. As with strange music, the sumptious effects of paint as I apply it to a surface brings to mind a fantastic state of being, a vague sensation that leaves one with a memory that seems more like a dream.

As Herbert Read said, "What men do makes them what they are: how they do what they do determines the quality of what they are: and it is only when the doing is raised to the dignity of a regular or ritualistic art that it penetrates into the deepest recesses of the soul."

The ushering in of any new epoch is a bewildering sight to the casual observer. Out of the art centers of the world have come varied and numerous concepts on painting. Unlike his predecessors, the artist of today can experience or be made aware of the world art scene with comparable ease. There is, however, a trend that has definite significance to the artist of today. I believe it can be explained by treating this development as a phenomena rooted in the past, but manifesting itself in the intellect of the present. Modern art has evolved from one step to another. From its initiation by primitive man, expression was of his everyday basic contacts with nature. As man began to grow intellectually,

The rest of the thesis is photographs of his drawings, paintings, and sculpture, which his thesis advisors (his teachers at Cranbrook) would have already seen. Art, not words, are what speak in an MFA thesis.



Binding this text and its images into a book made a record for Cranbrook (they keep a copy) and the artist himself. It's an archive that's nowhere near as impressive as seeing the real body of work in person. It's meant to say, "Here is the proof of what I did over time." It's a little like this book, except the thesis covers only two years of work, not sixty-three.

When I started this project, the text of the thesis struck me as something my father definitely could have written at age 25 but mostly rejected by age 65. It was pretentious in a height-of-American-Abstract-Expressionism way, the voice of a talented prince trying on the king's robes. Read this excerpt from his thesis: He's talking about artists, which means he's talking about himself:

> *The innovator has been blessed with the curse of the cultural lag. It seems that this lack of understanding accompanies advancement. No matter how we may feel personally, the scorn and curses inflicted by the public are signs that there is a difference in perceived realities that conflict.*

As a modern artist, he's an innovator. Like Cassandra, he's blessed with a curse, trying to show people things that nobody is ready to see. The public (people who don't get it) inflict scorn and curses. It's all very romantic, heroic, and Greek-myth-inflected. It's very strange to read, as I never knew my father to describe himself floridly or as one of a heroic avant-garde. He was a family man who lived in Nebraska, for god's sake. He usually voted Republican.

But the more time I spent with this project, the more I realized that throughout his life he held to much of what he wrote in his thesis in principle if not expression. You'll see this in the newspaper articles where he's quoted. His beliefs are consistent over time: The artist has a special place in modern society. The artist is free. And the price of being special and free in a society hell-bent on turning everything into a grinning dollar is accepting that most of the public won't give a damn about art and often even be hostile to it. He knew this intellectually in 1958 as he threw himself into becoming an artist.

Text of Peter Hill's MFA Thesis

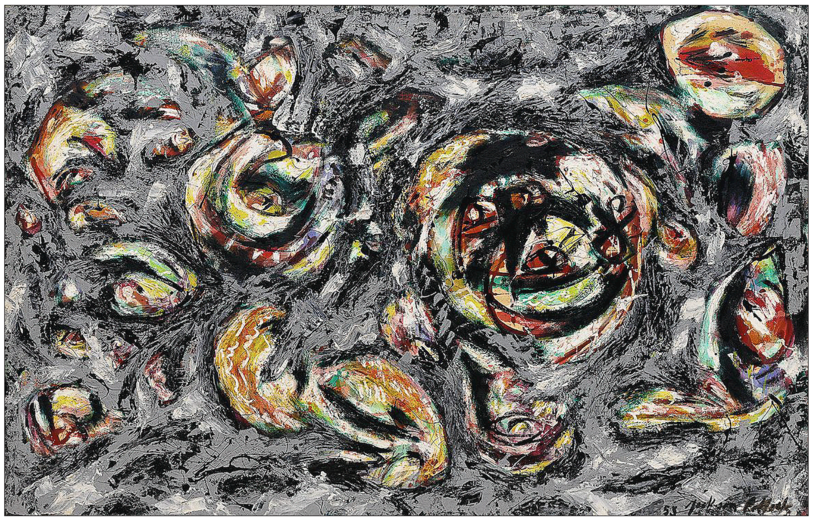
"We used to represent things visible on earth, things we enjoyed seeing. Now we reveal the underlying reality of visible things and thus express our belief that visible reality is merely an isolated phenomenon, outnumbered by other, unseen realities. Thus things take on a vaster, more varied significance, often seemingly in contradiction with rational experience. Hence a tendency to stress the element of the essential in the random."

Klee[1] made this statement when asked to give his description of the evolution of his art. Klee was able to give verbal direction to his industry. It seems that Klee understood this modern epoch, for in his writings he sets down a credo that works surprisingly well for most painters working in the modern idiom.

It has been more than ten years since Klee left the contemporary scene, but his words seem as fresh today as they did when they were first written. The problem of the artist is to reach beyond the reality of vision. The fixed intention of reality inhibits deep significance. The search behind the scene for an orchestration in keeping with the artist's temperament is far more important than an idea which is safe in the academic tradition.

The modern tradition has in its very being an uneasy social heritage. The attitude of man has always been slow to grasp the ideas of the present. The innovator has been blessed with the curse of the cultural lag. It seems that this lack of understanding accompanies advancement. No matter how we may feel personally, the scorn and curses inflicted by the public are signs that there is a difference in perceived realities that conflict.

The recent trends in painting and sculpture show the determined attitude of the artist. Men like Pollock, De Kooning, and Guston[2] have developed new concepts concerning natural relationships. The inspiring realization of these men typifies the concern for personal development and discovery that is the goal of every artist.



Jackson Pollock, *Ocean Greyness*, 1953.
Oil on canvas, 57.75 x 90 in.
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

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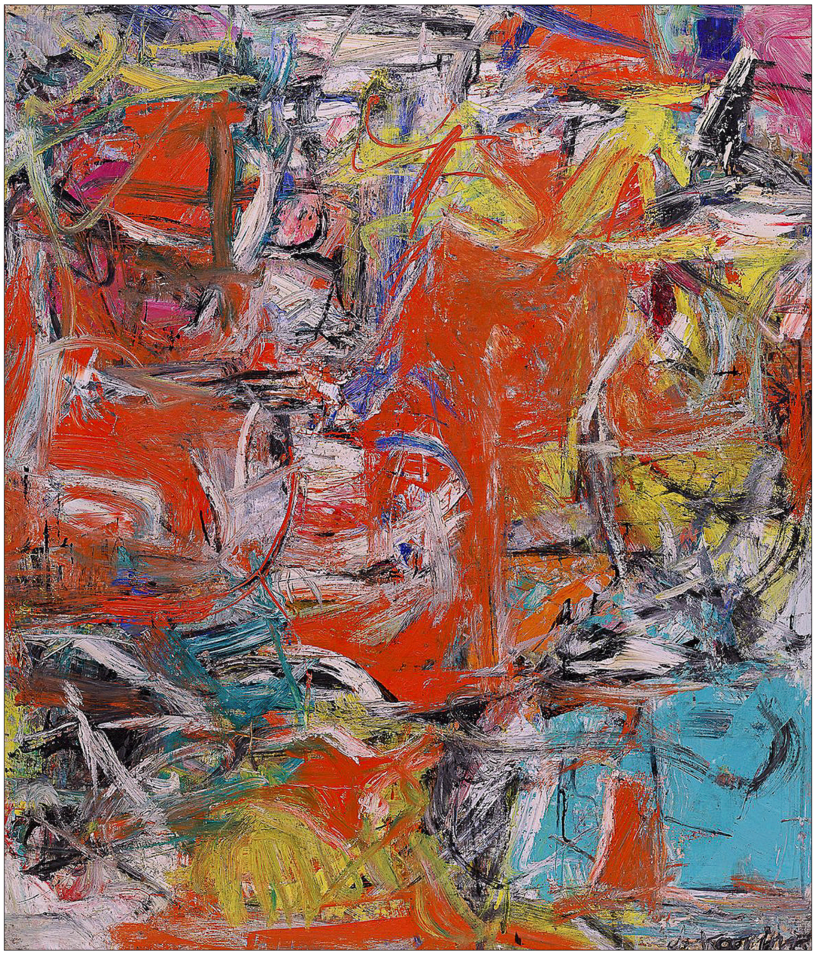
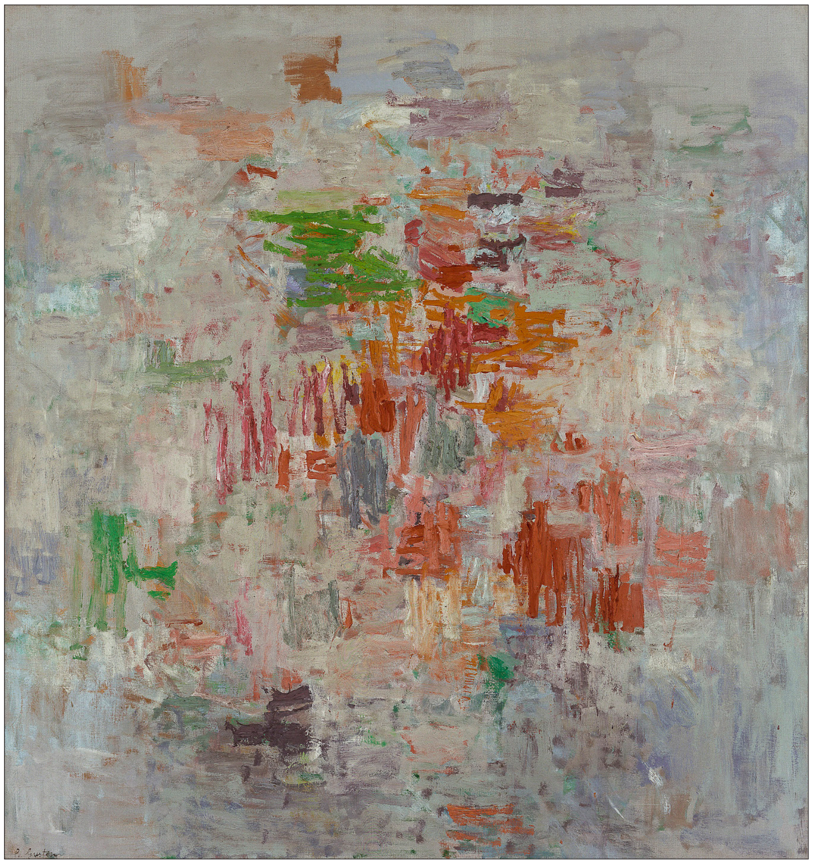
[1] Paul Klee (1879–1940) was a Swiss painter who lived in Germany from 1906 to 1933. He aligned himself with the "Blue Rider" group of artists in 1912 and later taught at the Bauhaus from 1920 to 1931. Klee's statement is a fair description of one strain of Abstract Expressionism of the 1950s.

[2] Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, and Philip Guston were prominent artists in the Abstract Expressionist movement of the 1940s and 1950s. The paintings by these artists reproduced in this section do not appear in my father's thesis; rather, they are representative of works my father might have seen in the art journals of the mid-1950s.



Willem de Kooning, *Composition*, 1955.
Oil, enamel, and charcoal on canvas, 79 x 69 in.
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.



Philip Guston, *Summer*, 1954.
Oil on canvas, 64 x 60 in. Private Collection.

The problems of the young artist are many and varied. To each artist a set of obstacles have invariably barred the way to a personal image. To explain my position, I set forth this credo: I am against geometrical abstraction and representational art. I am in search of more spontaneous, inward and, in the final analysis contemplative and cosmic expression. In painting I find myself developing concepts to get them out of my system. I feel that by thoroughly exploiting an idea I will gain far more than if pick at it intermittently. I feel that through forcing concept after concept, an ultimate statement will come as a natural outgrowth of labor. I am, however, not worried about forcing a personal image, because I believe that the ultimate personal statement is the settling of the intellect, and can only be obtained by industrious contemplation of the artist.

As for my painting to date, I feel a certain symbolism appearing in my work. I also have an affinity for the subtle. I find a great excitement in restful subtlety, yet I enjoy violent color. As I paint, I feel an almost primitive awareness of shape and tone quality. This is perhaps why I feel that the trend in art is primitive or concerned with essentials in its lust for invention. As I look at my paintings and drawings, I see a rather mysterious quality in them. They seem to have a superreal being, a statement of personal reality. As with strange music, the sumptious effects of paint as I apply it to a surface brings to mind a fantastic state of being, a vague sensation that leaves one with a memory that seems more like a dream.

As Herbert Read[3] said, "What men do makes them what they are: how they do what they do determines the quality of what they are: and it is only when the doing is raised to the dignity of a regular or ritualistic art that it penetrates into the deepest recesses of the soul."

The ushering in of any new epoch is a bewildering sight to the casual observer. Out of the art centers of the world have come varied and numerous concepts on painting. Unlike his predecessors, the artist of today can experience or be made aware of the world art scene with comparable ease. There is, however, a trend that has definite significance to the artist of today. I believe it can be explained by treating this development as a phenomena rooted in the past, but manifesting itself in the intellect of the present. Modern art has evolved from one step to another. From its initiation by primitive man, expression was of his everyday basic contacts with nature. As man began to grow intellectually, art slowly emerged into realism. Realism with its academic attitude evolved naturally into expressionism. After a period of re-examination of nature, a revolution took place with the intellect taking hold in the form of abstractionism.

At the present, I feel that we are moving toward what I would like to call "symbolic primitivism." The artist has been thrown back to the earliest stages of art endeavor. It is different, however, for with his background of the past, he can study its many facets, but he can never return. He can imitate, but not re-create. To revisit would be against the very essence of the concept. In this new stage the artist has begun his toughest struggle, for art has been reduced to its essentials, and the participant for the first time is completely on his own to investigate anew the possibilities that lay within the depth and breadth of the artist's pallet. Like primitive man, he is free to do as he pleases, for academic skill is not as important as creative initiative.

The problem of a personal image is of importance to a painter. Only out of his experiences can the artist arrive at what can be called a personal image. I do not believe the artist should be bound by a stylistic device or trademark, but a painter's philosophy should continue to evolve and grow. This attitude of academic stylization is confining, thus restricting the natural growth of the painter. To be completely effective, spontaneity of form, conception, and execution has to be almost second nature. To achieve this, a painter should always be in an experimental mood, ever wanting to find invention new and even foreign to a previous image.

It has been the artist's destiny to create for himself a world apart from any other; like the other arts of human life, the art of painting weds the past to the present and conceives the future. The personal creation of a whole new universe that reflects his nature and temperament is his occupation. Critical reaction to the results of his labor should be no barrier to his creative adventure. The important thing is the honesty of the creator in using his inborn intellectual judgment, the growth and development of a philosophy that will enhance the evolution of a personal statement.

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[3] Sir Herbert Read (1893–1968) was an English art historian, poet, critic, and philosopher, best known for books on art, including texts on the role of art in education.

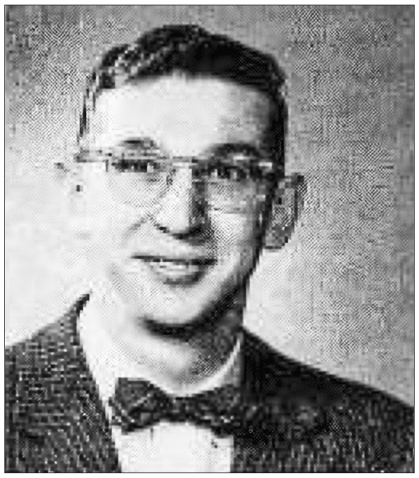
First Years in Omaha: 1958 to 1961

The years 1958–1961 were busy for the young artist, although you could say that about all his years.

In summer 1958, my father landed a position teaching studio art and art history at Omaha University. He and his bride of one year, Jody Hill, moved from Michigan to Omaha. In the years immediately following, he instructed students who would become his friends, including Beverly Young, Judy Church, and Toni Turnquist.

Dad taught during the day and some nights; he painted and drew whenever he could. He entered works in regional exhibits, e.g., the Joslyn Biennial and the Sioux City Art Center. As for where to sell paintings, he went to the main player in town: the Joslyn Museum of Art, which sold and rented artists' works.

It was at the Joslyn that a young lawyer and art collector named Robert (Bob) Kutak first saw Peter Hill's works and began buying them, first for his personal collection and later his law offices. A large oil, *3:30 P.M.* (page 56), was one of the first purchases.

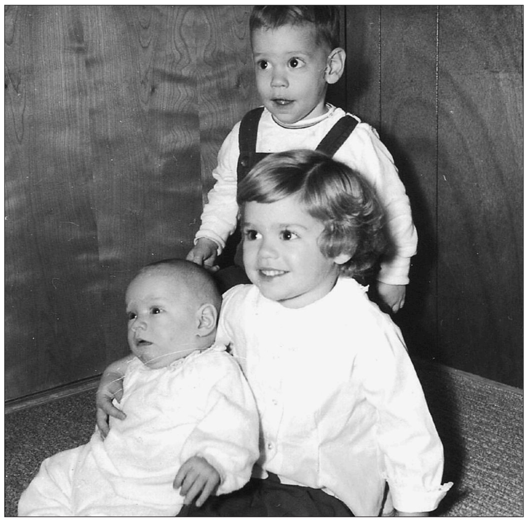


Bob Kutak in 1955

Peter Hill with fellow teachers Jane Anderson, Sandra Gierke, and Vic Blackwell at Omaha University in 1959 or 1960.

Never satisfied with just buying art, Bob wanted to meet the artist. Dad and Bob became good friends; I recall Kutak visiting our home several times, and my dad and I went to Bob's law office at least once. Dad and Bob also traveled to evaluate art that Bob was interested in buying for his office. One such trip in the early 1980s would prove particularly significant.

The home front was similarly busy. On November 7, 1958, Jody gave birth to their first child, a daughter named Joan Lindsey. Two years later, on July 29, 1960, came their first son, James Campbell. Then was born their second son, Peter Woodworth Jr., on September 10, 1961. And throughout 1961, Dad prepared for his first major one-man exhibition, which would be at the Joslyn Museum of Art.

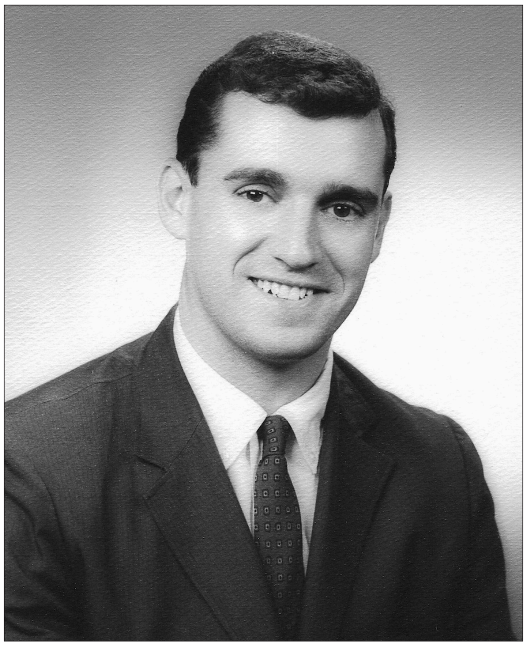


Lindsey, Jim, and Pete, December 1961

There was one tragedy. On July 17, 1961, my father's mother, Helen Johnson Hill, died suddenly at age 56. Her husband Lyman, nine years her senior, found himself a widower and alone in their home in Detroit. My father adored his mother. In his memoir (at the back of this book), he writes, "I had the perfect Mom"—and attributed much of his interest in art to her.

Omaha World-Herald,
June 20, 1958

Regents Appoint 4 Faculty Members



The regents [of Omaha University] appointed four new faculty members.

Peter Hill was appointed an instructor of art. He has a Master of Fine Arts Degree from the Cranbrook Academy of Art at Bloomfield Hills.

Omaha World-Herald, January 4, 1959

Time Is Precious In Learning; Area College Enrollment Up

Hill at noon-hour study . . . No complaints.

Peter Hill, 25-year-old art instructor at the University of Omaha, is a young man who likes to make every minute count.

Most noons, for example, you'll find him dressed in paint-smeared coveralls, standing before an easel in his office, a sandwich in one hand and a brush in the other.

When he's not painting he's apt to make use of his lunch hour by reading.

To "stay sharp" in your field, he said, you need all the painting and extra reading you can work in, whether it's at the end of the formal working day or in the middle.

His schedule is a fierce one. Counting two evenings a week, when he teaches from 5:15 to 9:45 p.m., classroom instruction takes up 30 hours of his work week.

Part of the time he supervises two different drawing classes which meet simultaneously in separate rooms.

There are as many as 28 students in his drawing classes. To be able to move around freely among the easels and to give maximum individual attention, the ideally-sized class should have only about 15 students, he said.

But he hastened to add: "I have no complaints. I enjoy every minute. Compared with other colleges, the problem of crowded classrooms is not too bad here," he said. "It's a sign of the times."

Lansing State Journal,
February 22, 1959

Kresge Exhibits Show Art Works

A change in the exhibition program of the Kresge Art Center gallery [at Michigan State University] brings three qualified painters to the attention of art lovers in the community.

Peter Hill, a recent graduate of the Cranbrook School of Art, who is presently an instructor at the University of Omaha, is featured in the first gallery.

Unusually varied in style, his 13 oils should prove of special interest to admirers of abstract painting. The canvases are described as “colorful, sensitive statements involving use of space, pattern and soft passages, in lyrical, delicate vein.” This exhibition will run through March 3.

The Gateway, September 9, 1959

‘Cool’ Art Exhibits Stupefy New Studes

This is to expose the culprits of Coolsville Corner.

C.C. is the northwest wing corridor on the third floor. That’s where Omaha University art students, all hung-up on exhibitionism, can show their creations.

Right now the corner is crammed with the works of three instructors—Dr. John Blackwell, Peter Hill and Jane Anderson.

They’re the culprits and the offense is nearly inexcusable.

They’ve frightened the freshmen.

This isn’t a careless charge, but rather solidly based, and simply proven. Just look at the paintings.

O.K., you’ve looked long enough. Now if you are an upperclassman there is no sweat . . . you know this way-out stuff is not to be understood by mortal man.

But the frosh, who is hung-up on comprehending the entire college scene, can’t take the cool, cynical approach. He gazes and tries to get with it.

And this is one way to wind up on the couch.

The painting profs don’t even give out with titles for their strokings and splatterings. And the confusion is increased by the use of materials.

The teachers have dabbled, in addition to the traditional materials, in wood, scraps of cathedral glass, and some sort of gunny-sack cloth.

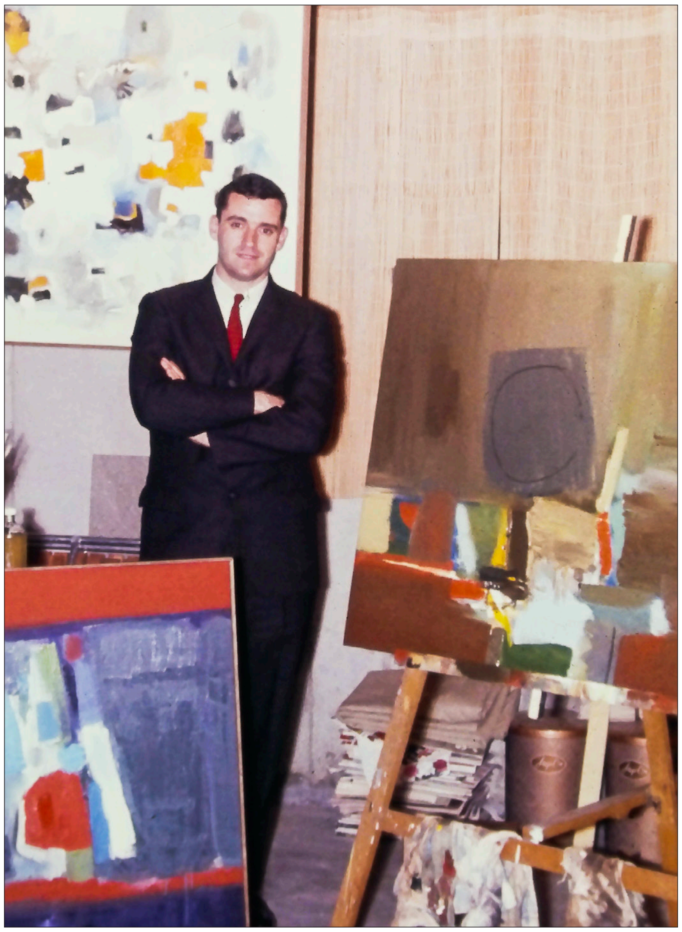
Two good examples of the exhibits which addle the average sincere freshman are a pair of large canvases by Peter Hill.

The eager neophyte looks and asks: What does it mean, what is he trying to say, I mean what is the story here, content and all that?

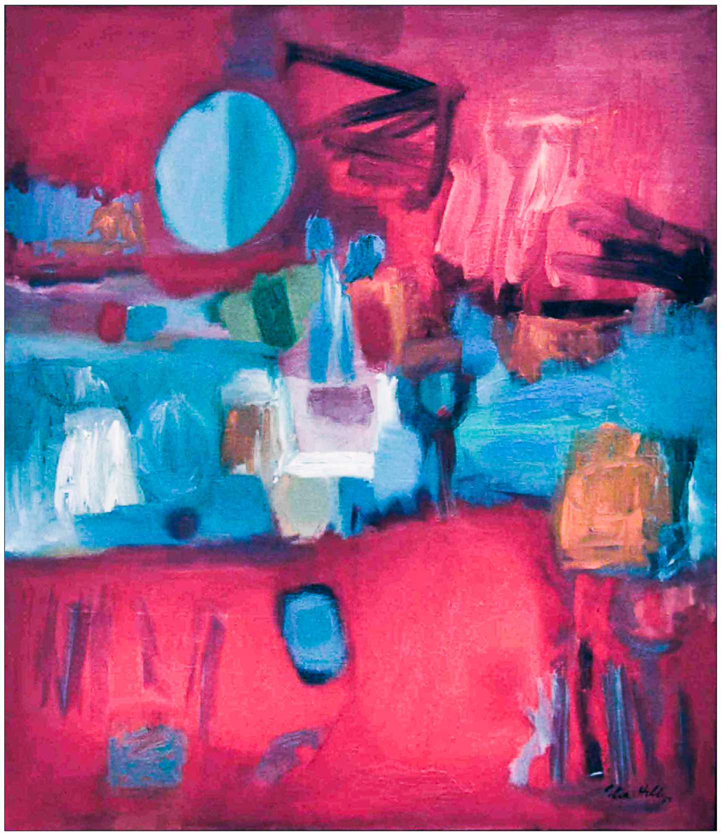
Mr. Hill has the answer. “Just color ideas, that’s all,” he shrugged.

In other words, he has been playing with paint, man.

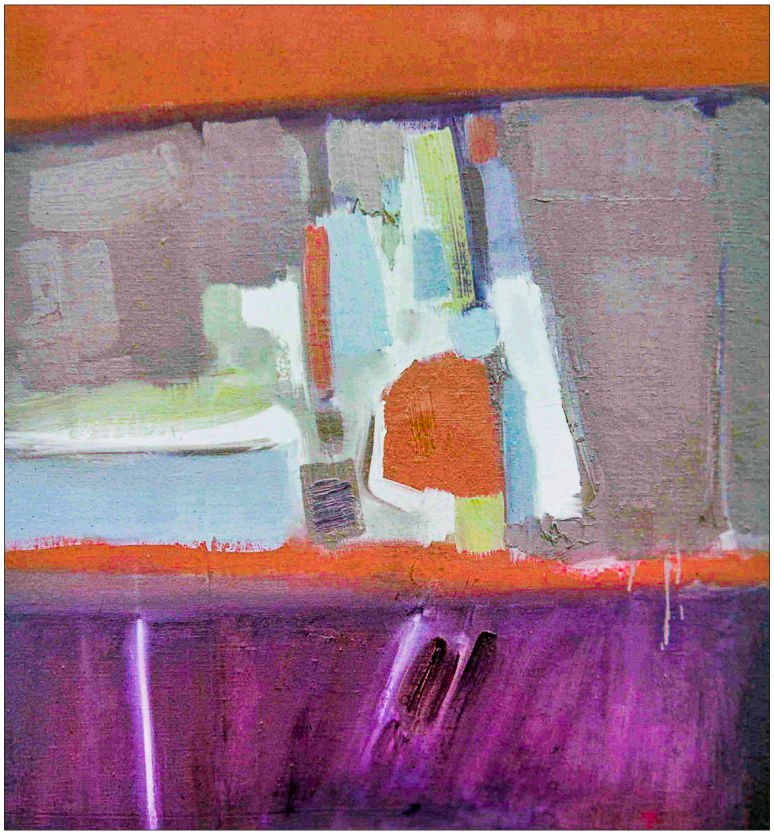
The Omaha University art department in 1960:
Peter Hill, Roger Twedt, Jane Anderson, and John (Vic) Blackwell



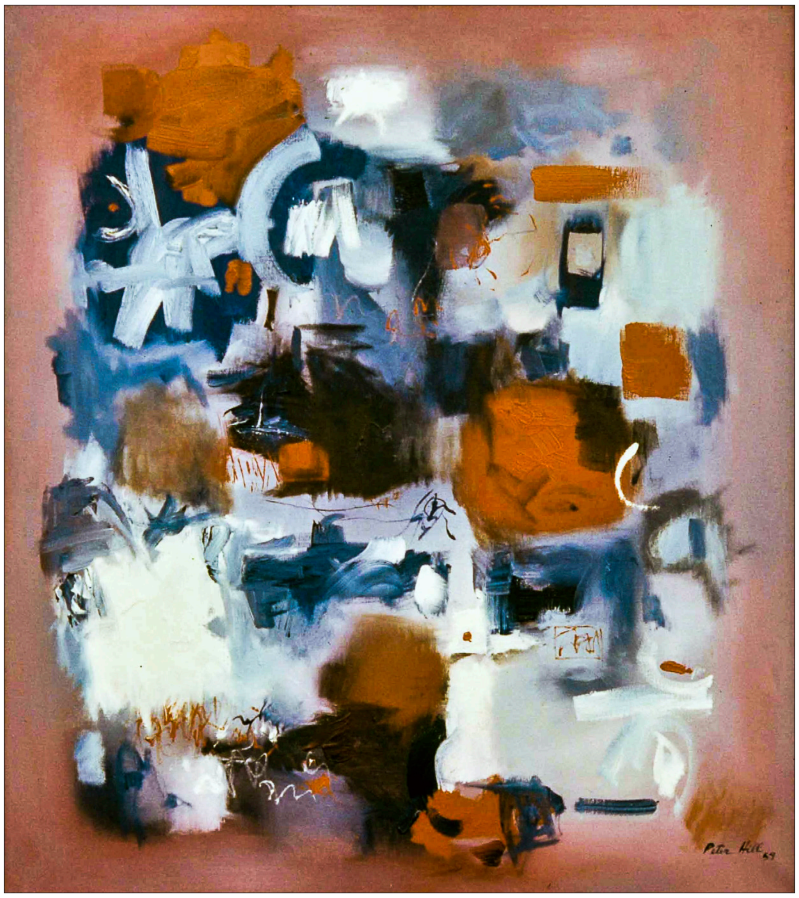
Two paintings in this photo appear on the next page.



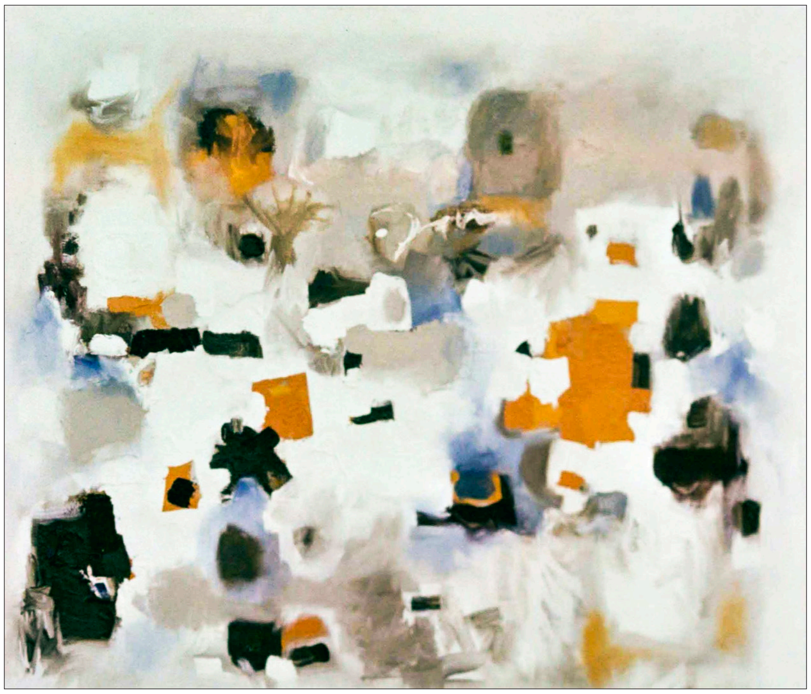
1959. Oil on canvas.



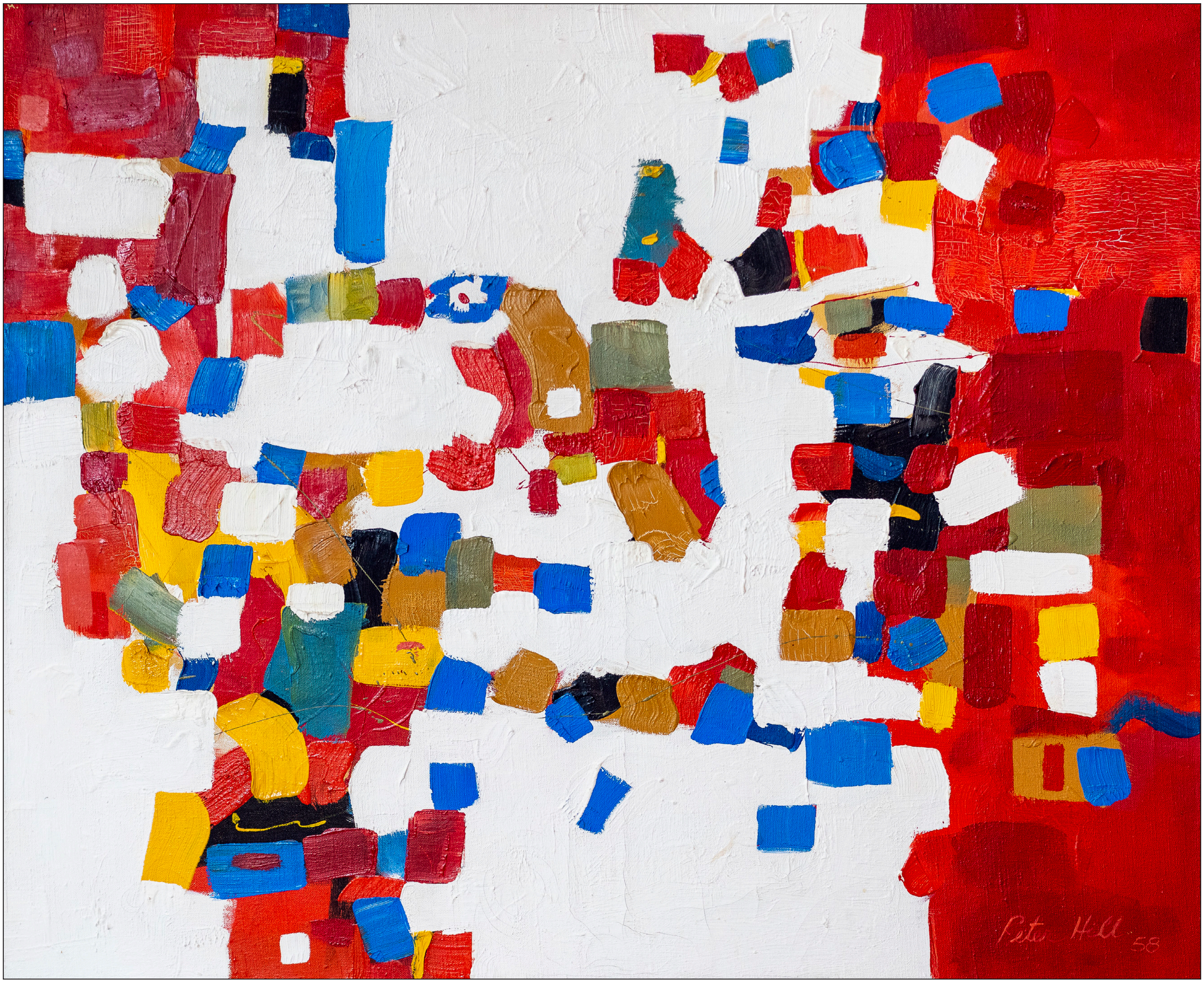
1959. Oil on canvas, 38 x 34 in.



1959. Oil on canvas.

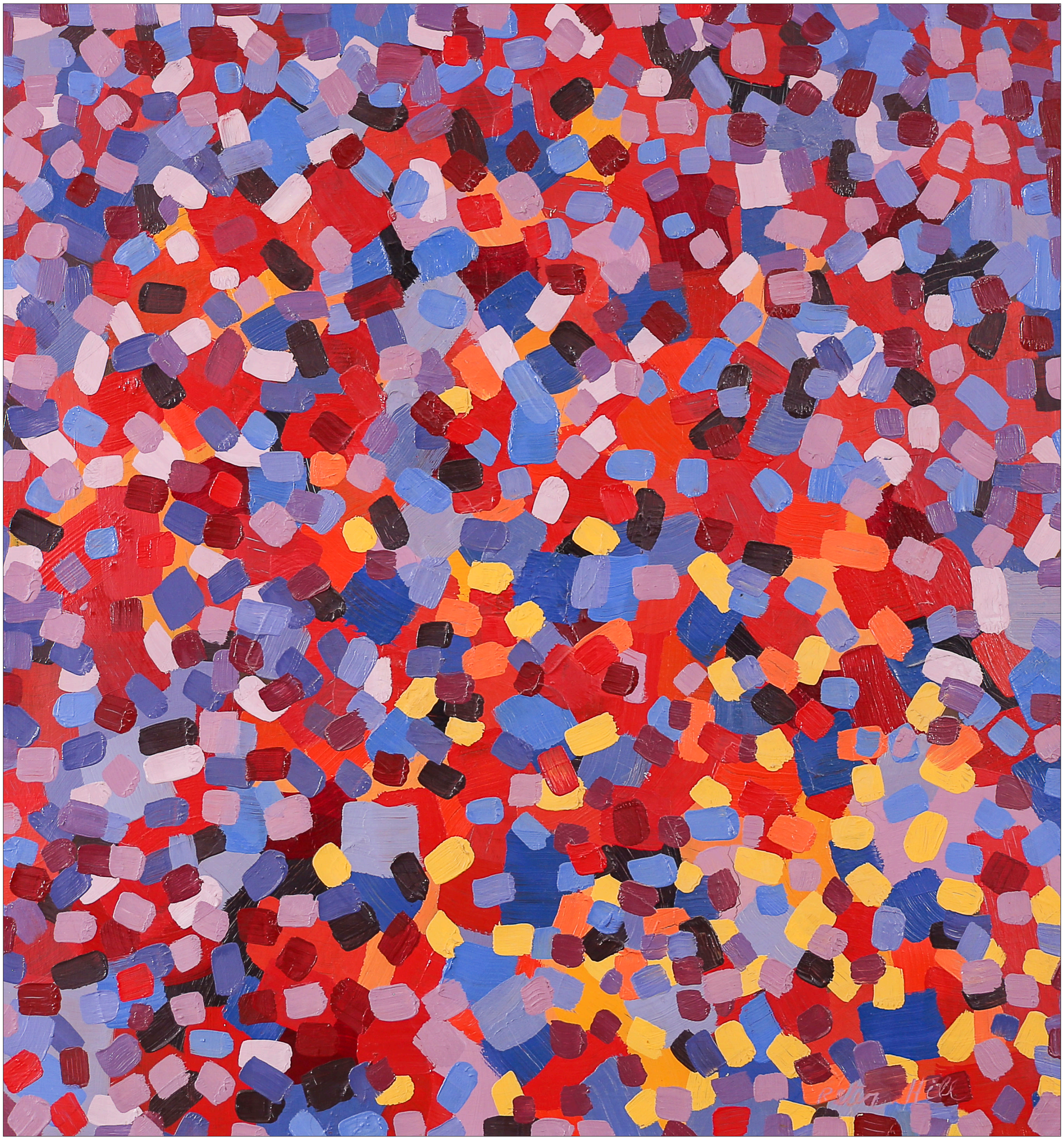


1959. Oil on canvas, 40 x 45 in.



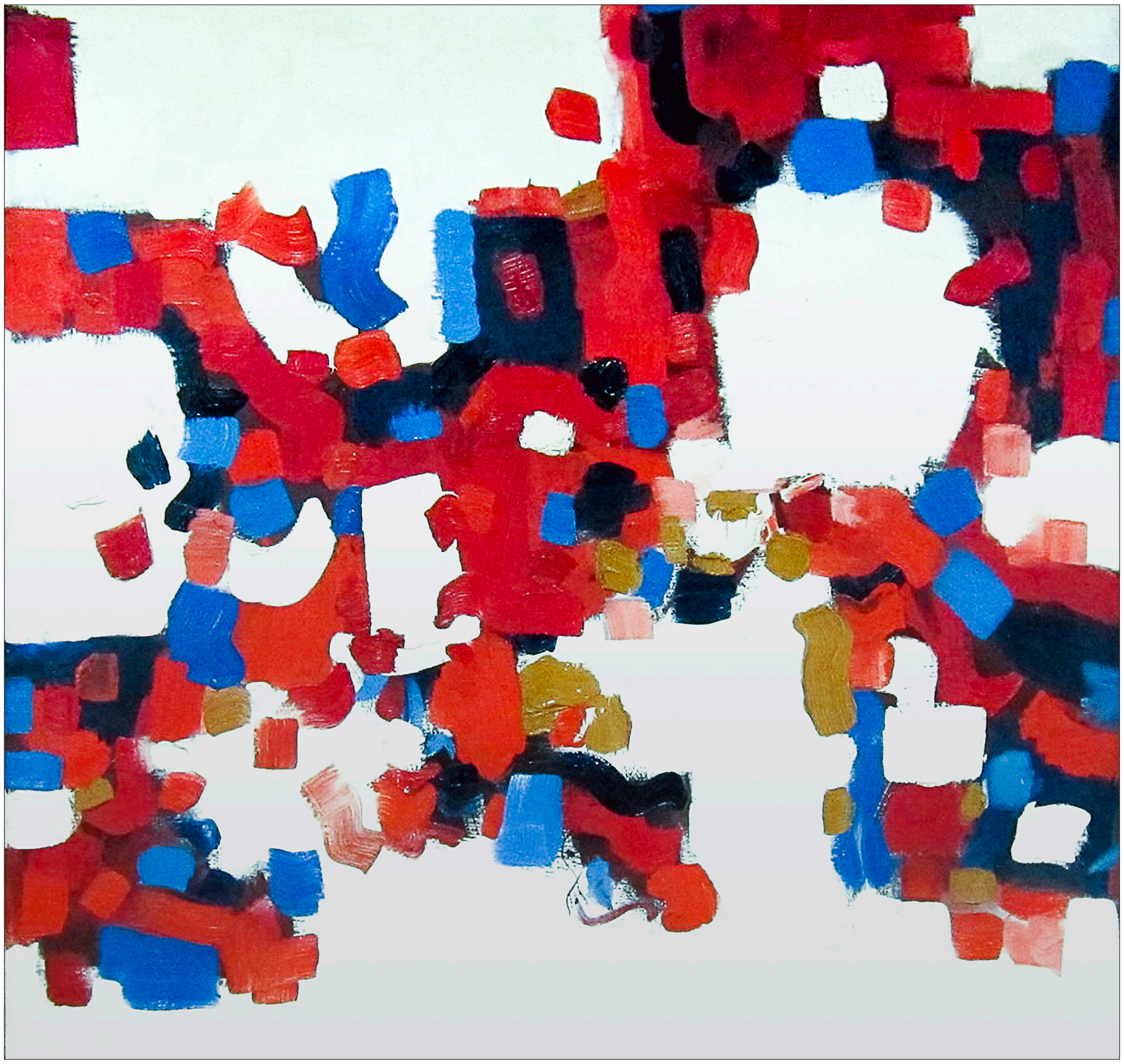
Untitled

1958. Oil on canvas, 32.5 x 39.75 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.



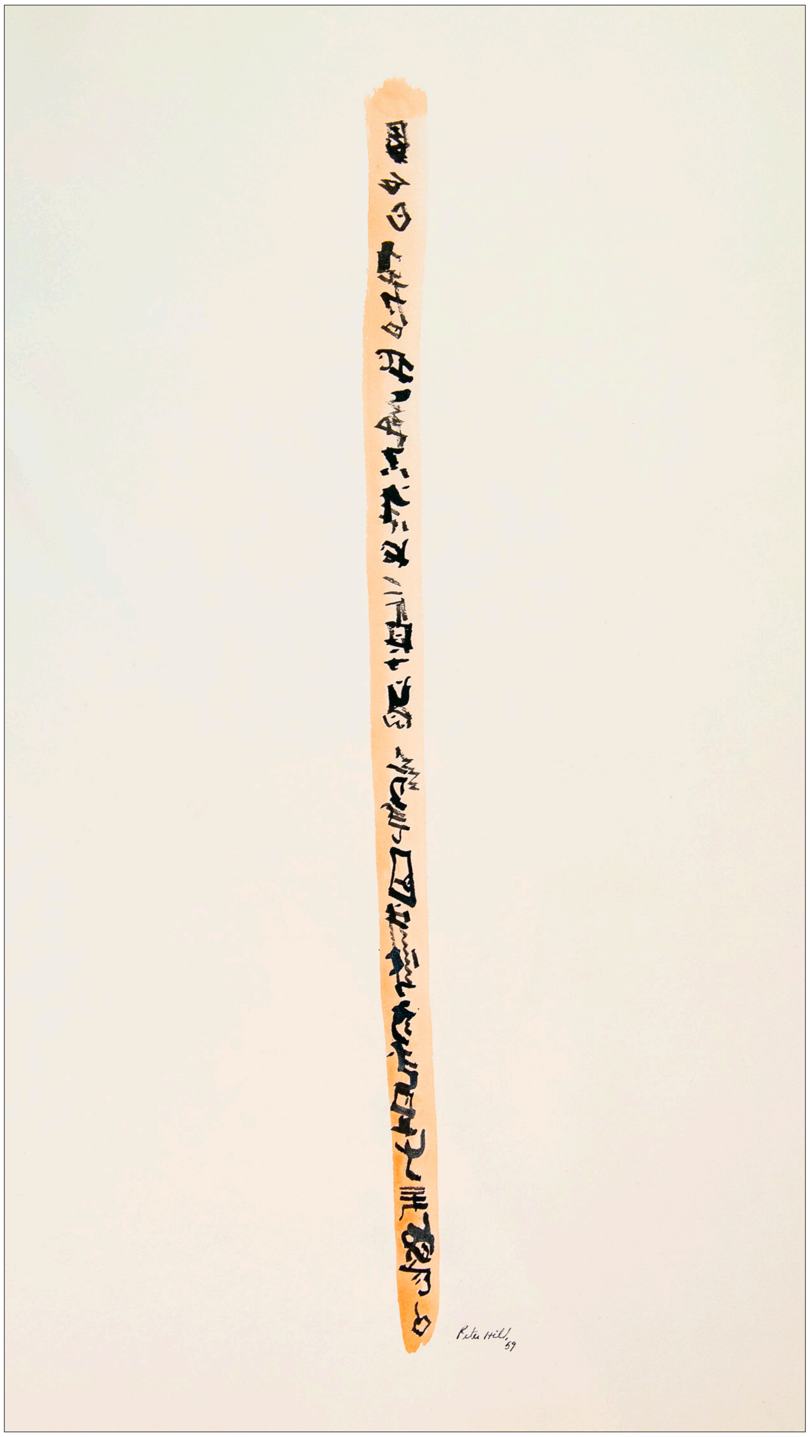
Untitled

No date. 36.5 x 34.5 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.

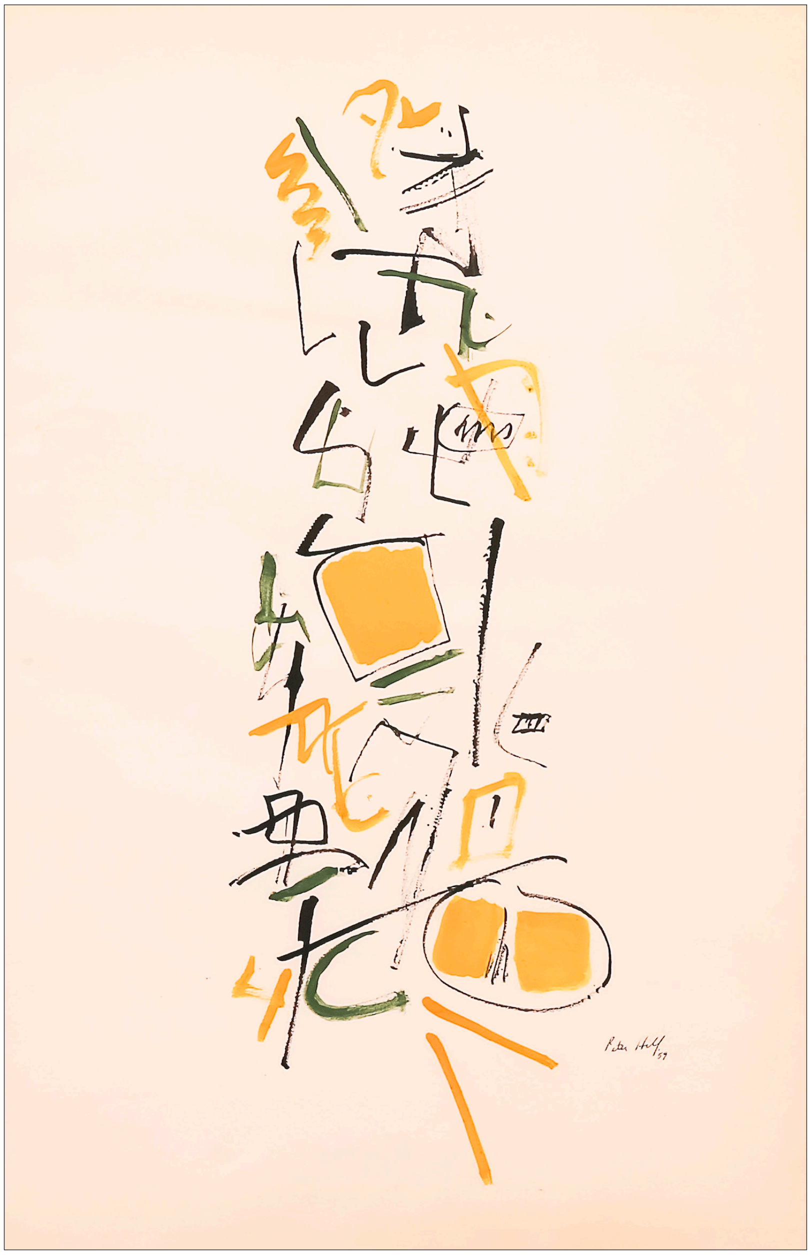


Composition

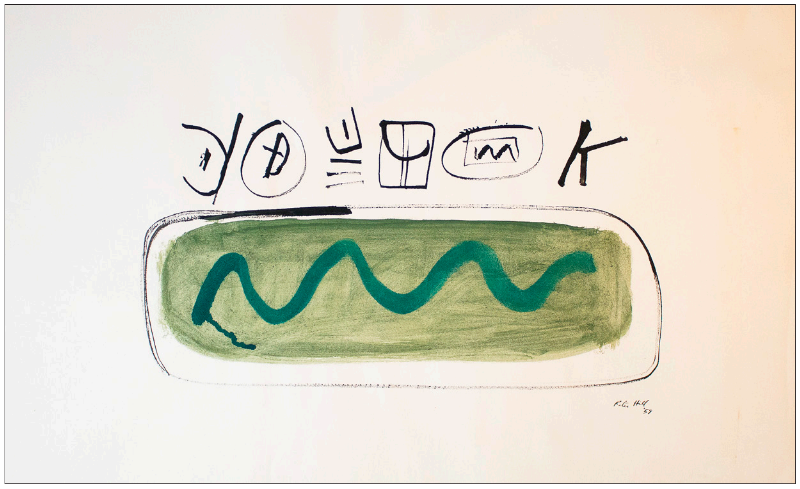
No date. Oil on canvas, 38 x 37 in.
Collection of the Museum of Nebraska Art.



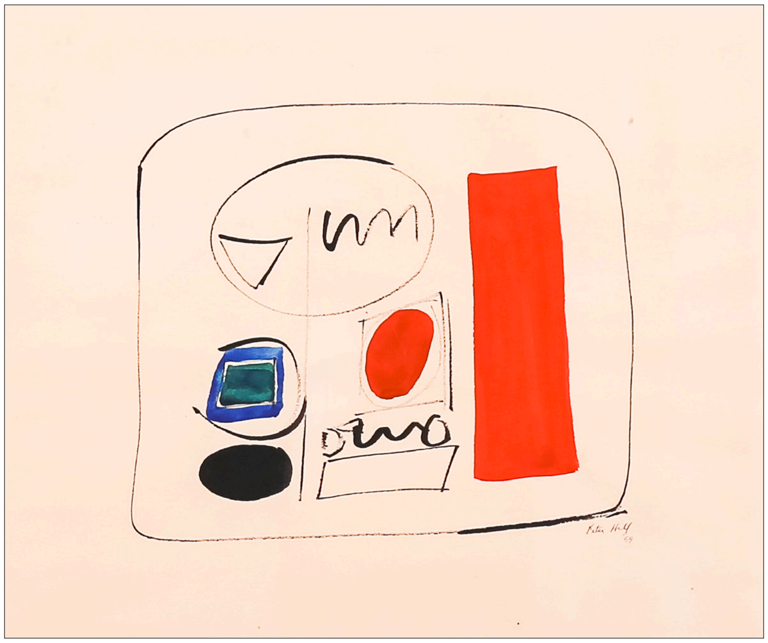
1959. Ink and watercolor on paper, 24 x 18 in.



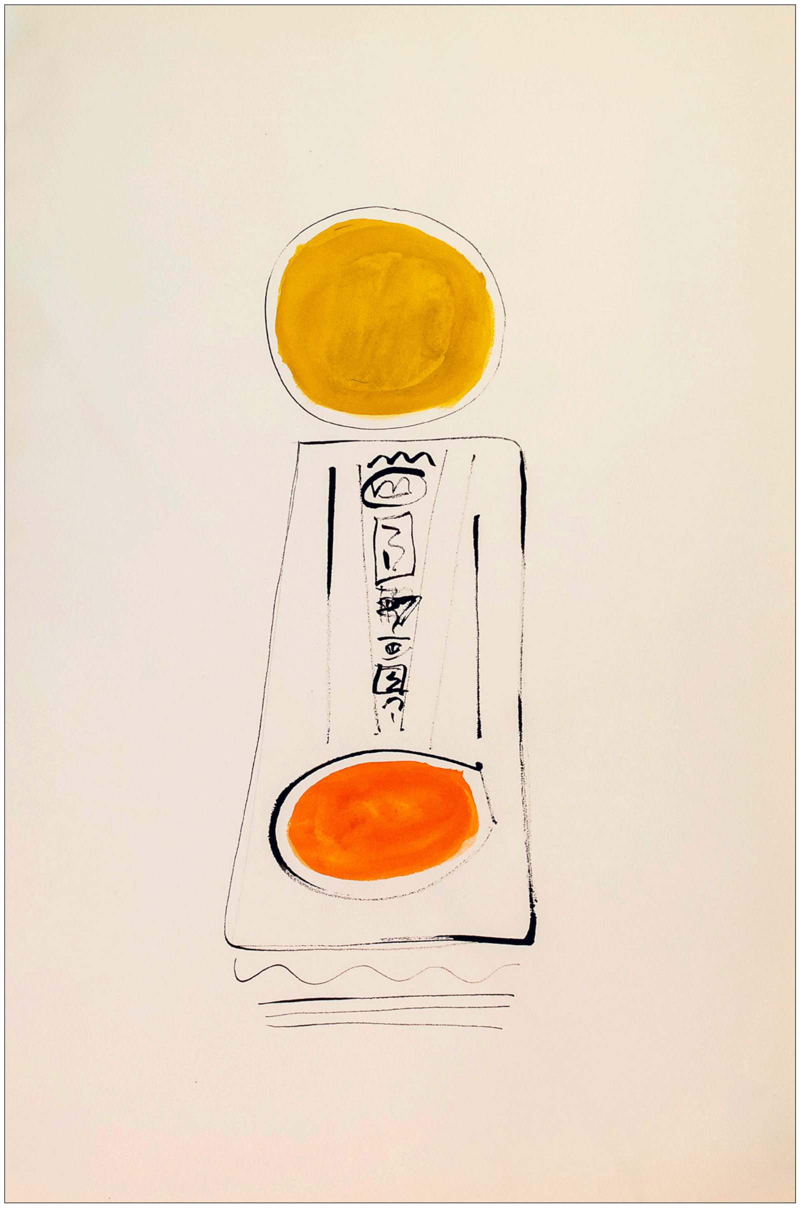
Ideograph, 1959. Ink and gouache on paper, 21.5 x 13.5 in.
Collection of Jonathan and Maureen Hill.



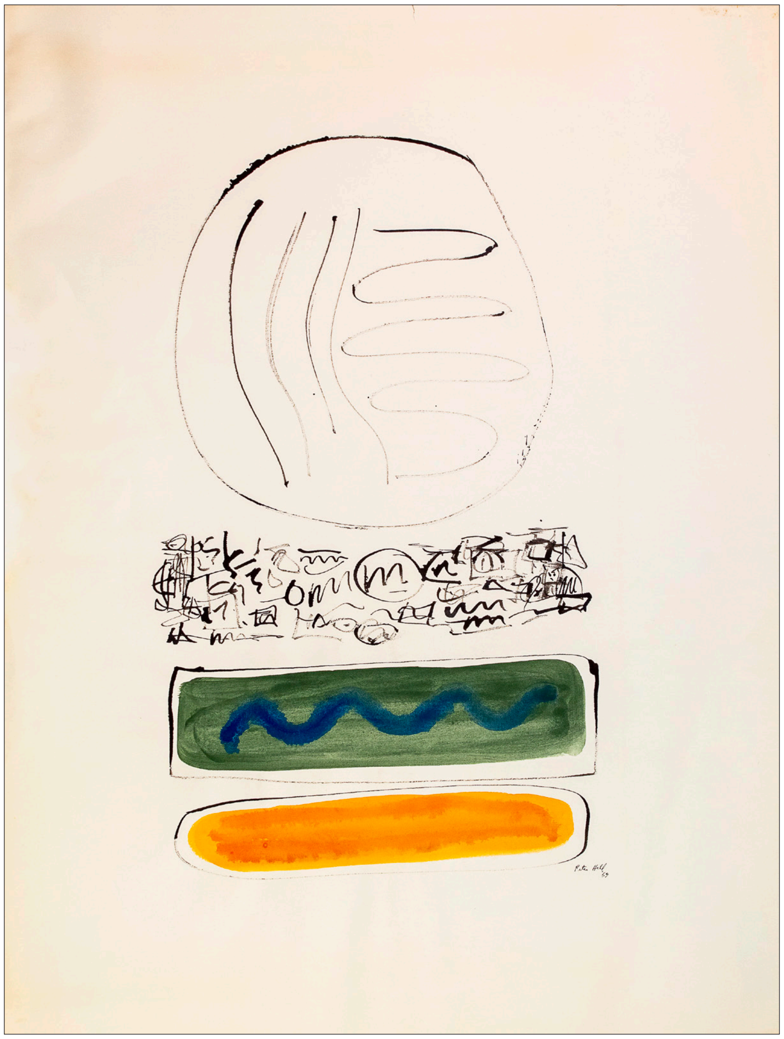
1959. Ink and watercolor on paper, 18 x 24 in.



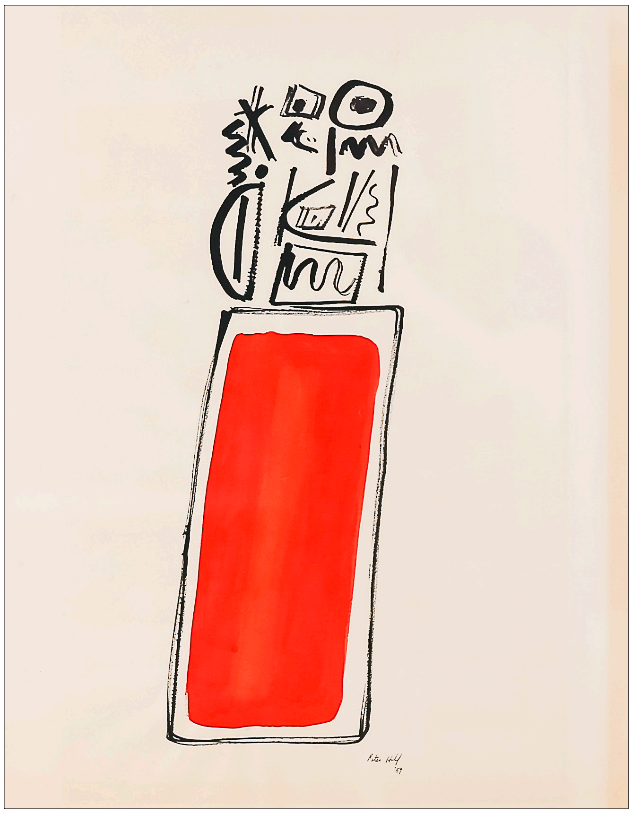
Still Life, 1959. Ink and gouache on paper, 12 x 14 in.
Collection of Jonathan and Maureen Hill.



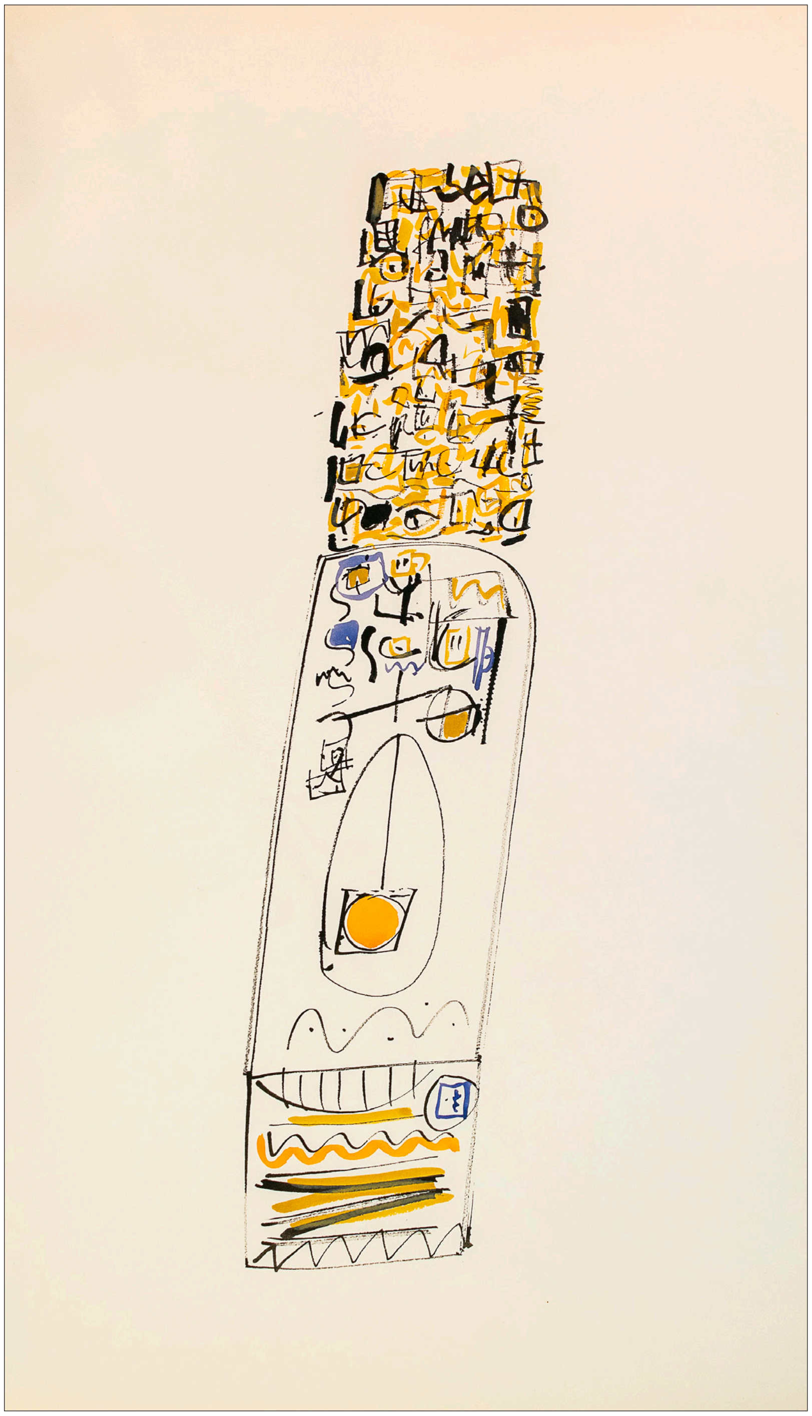
1959. Ink and watercolor on paper, 24 x 18 in.



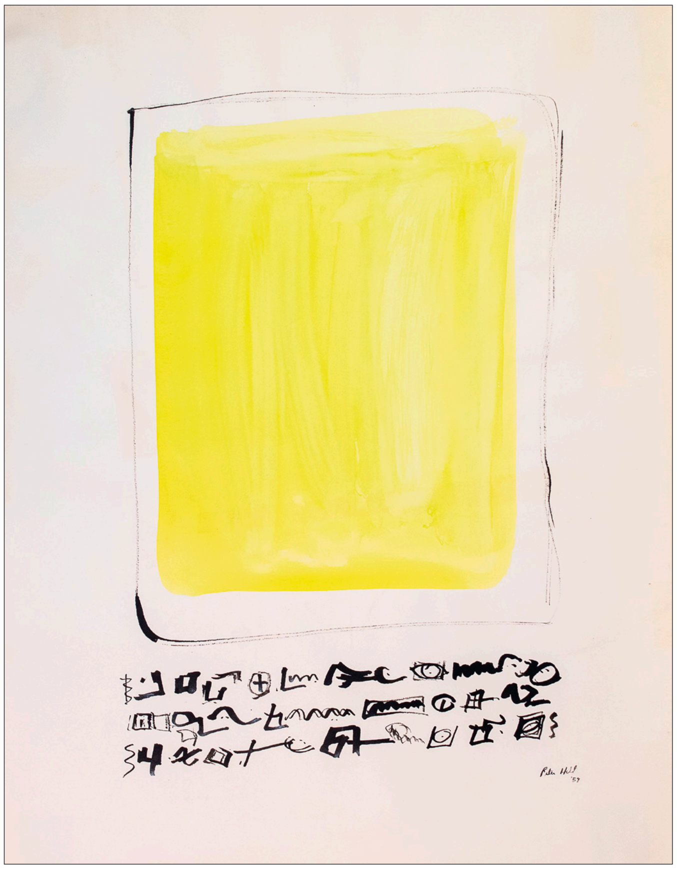
1959. Ink and watercolor on paper, 24 x 18 in.



Untitled, 1959. Ink and gouache, 20 x 16 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



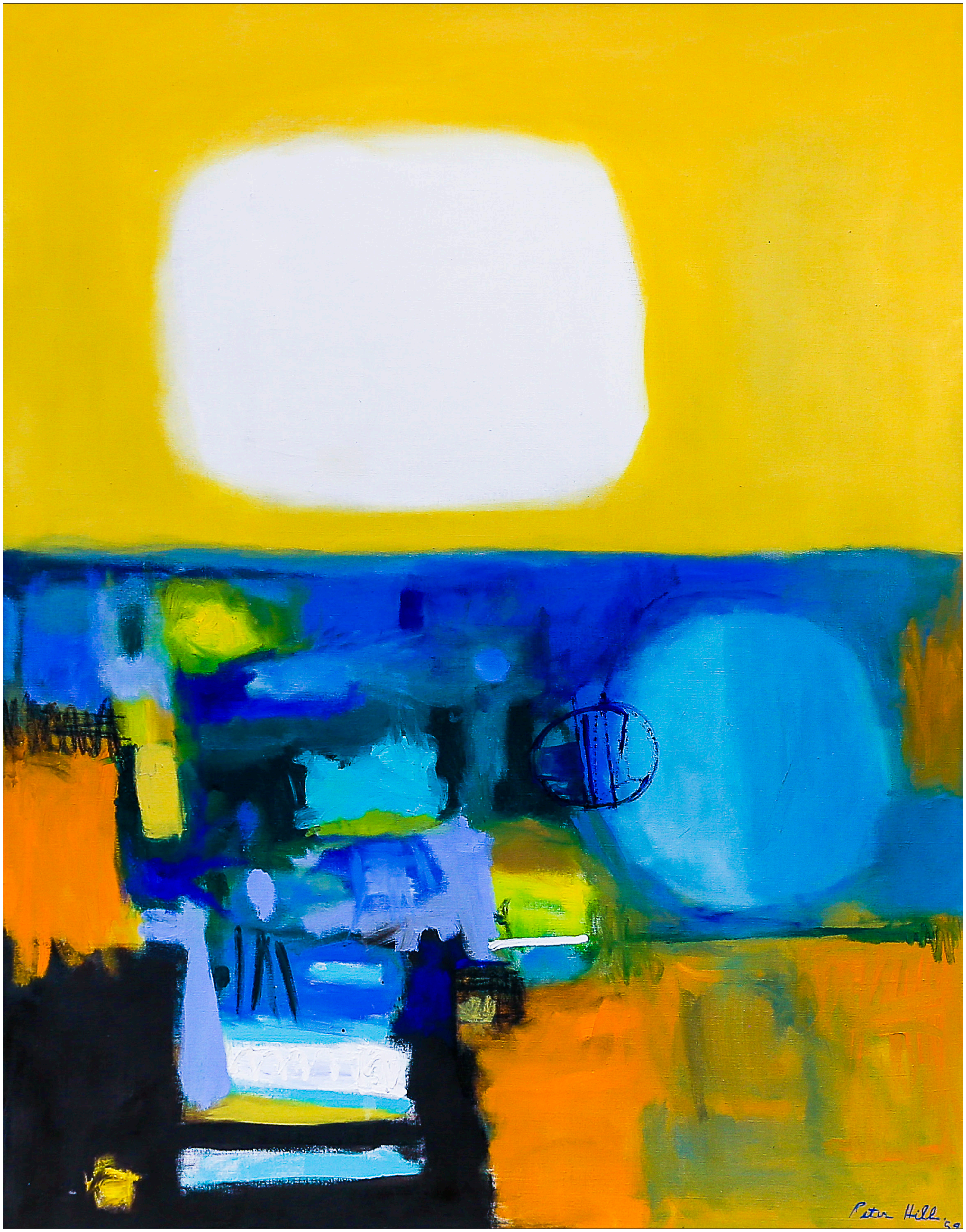
1959. Ink and watercolor on paper, 24 x 18 in.

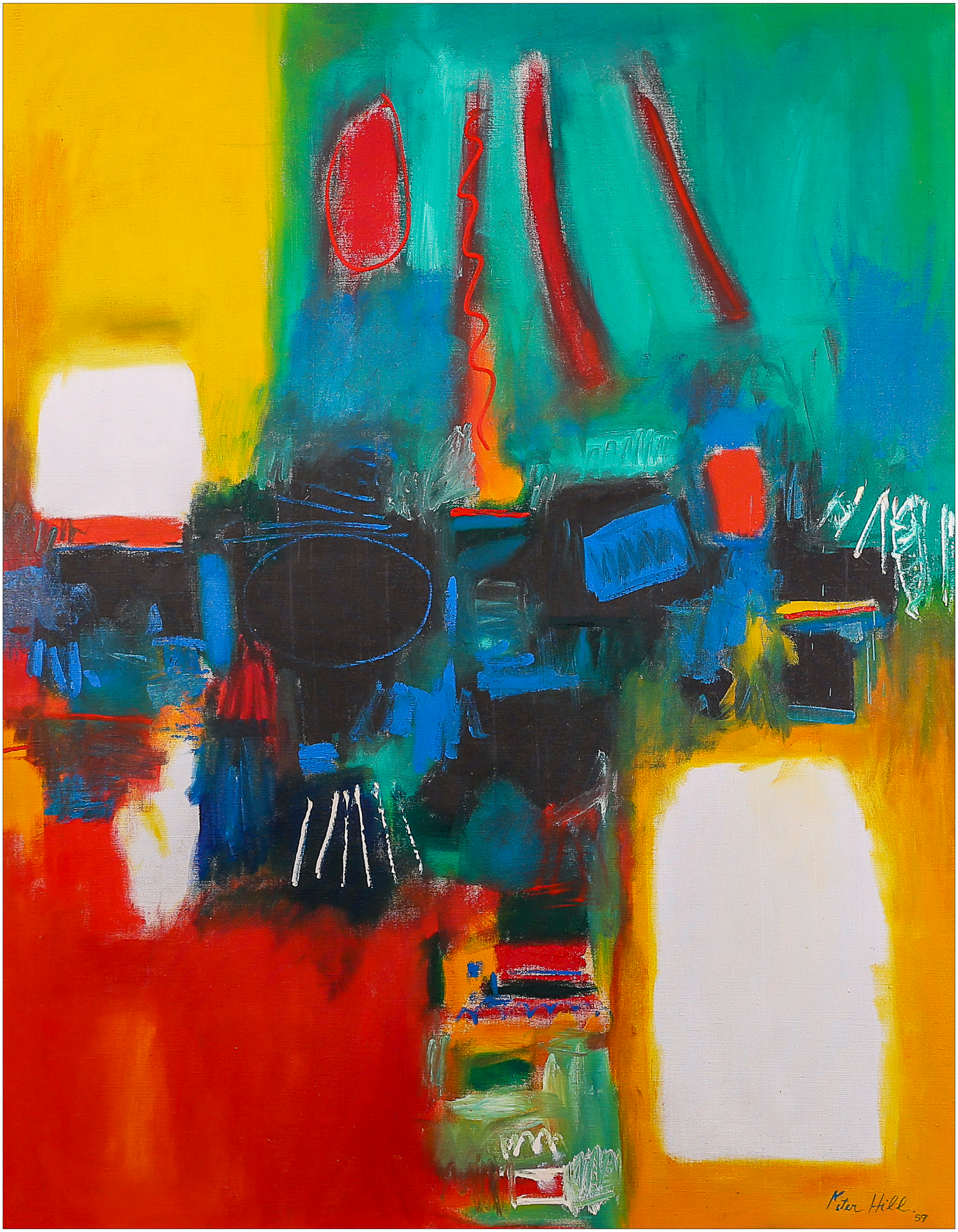


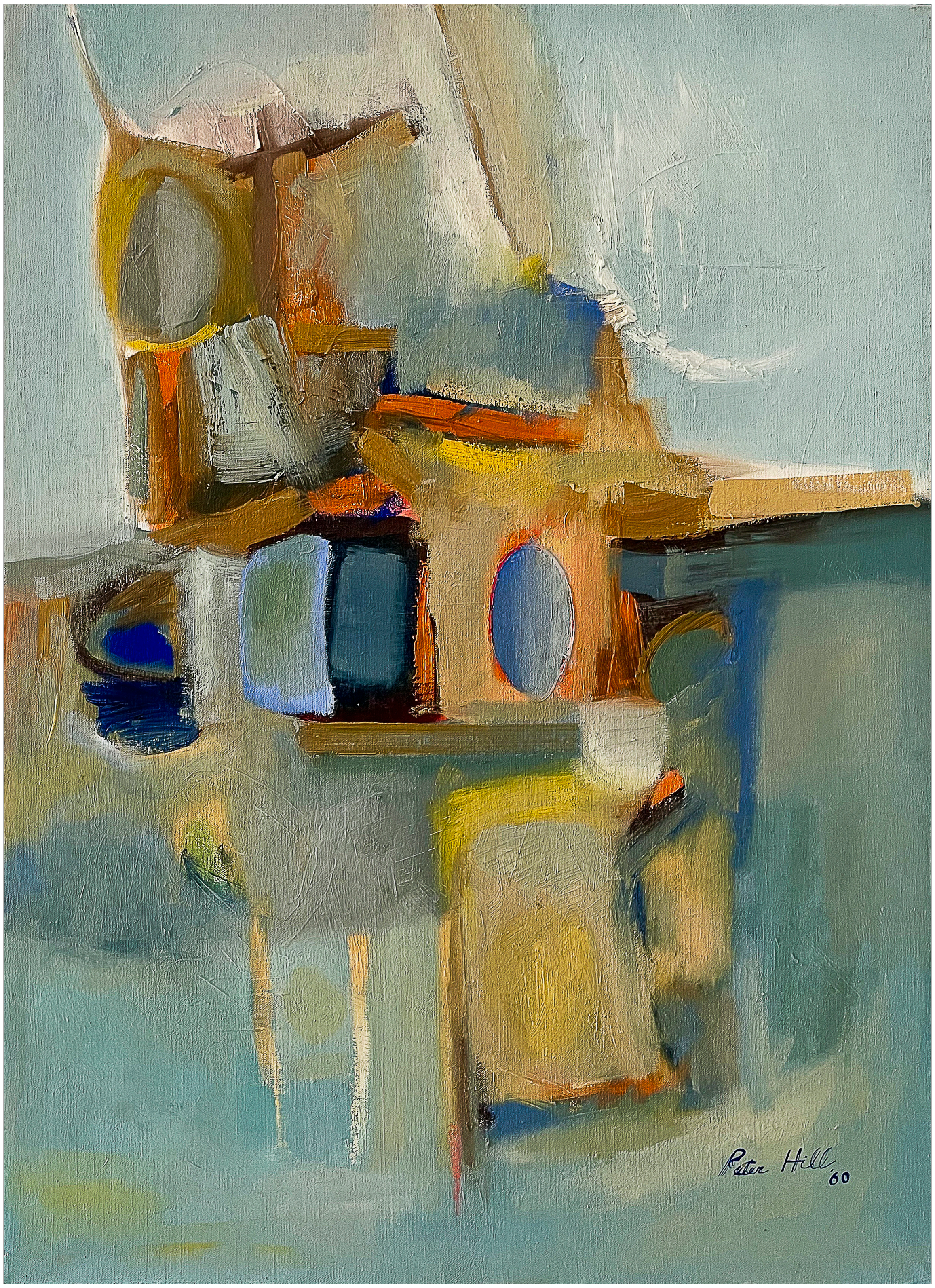
1959. Ink and watercolor on paper, 24 x 18 in.

Page 56:
3:30 P.M., 1959.
Oil on canvas, 54 x 43 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

Page 57:
Hot Landscape, 1959.
Oil on canvas, 54 x 42 in.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.

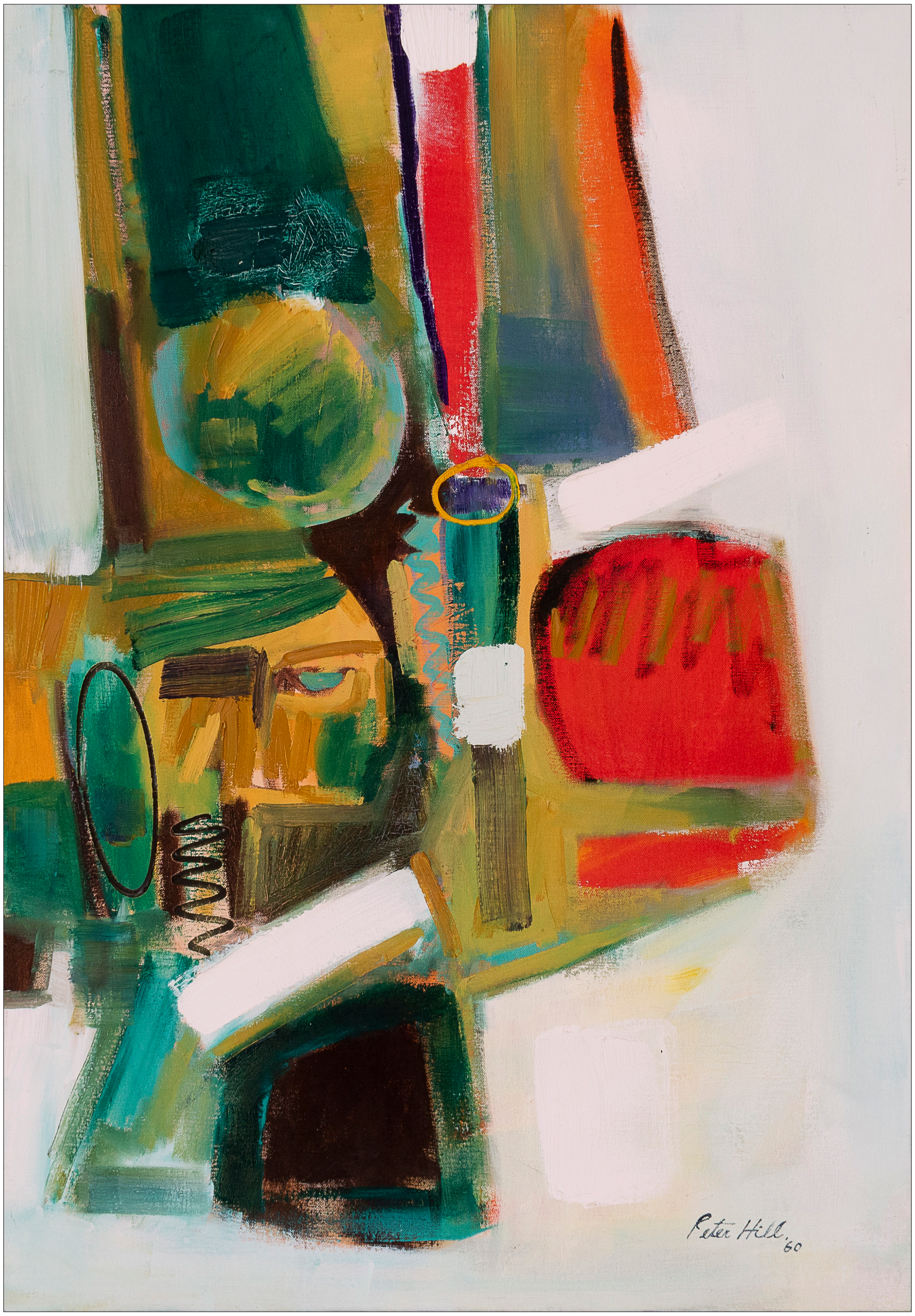

Peter Hill '59


Peter Hill
57



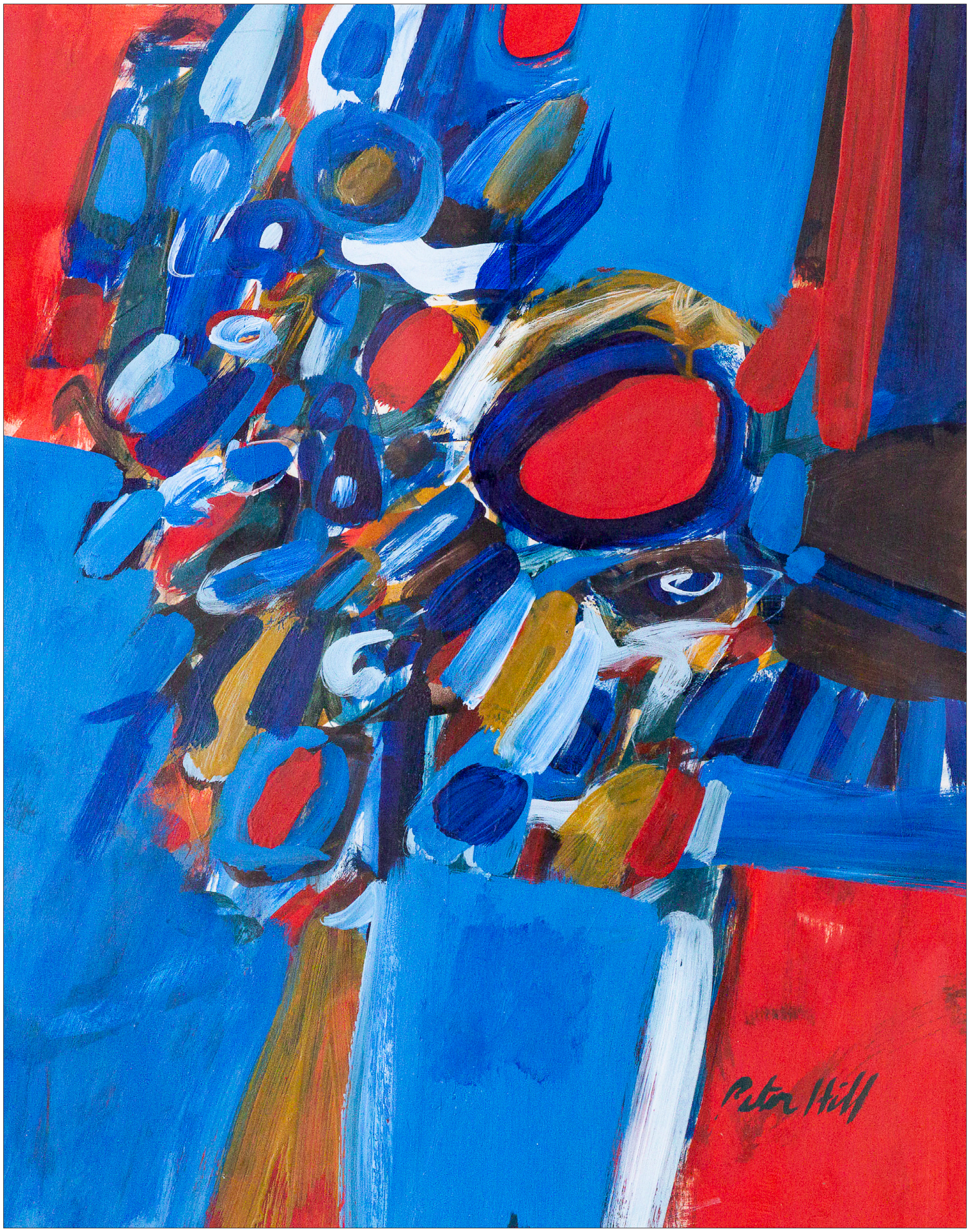
Untitled

1960. Oil on canvas, roughly 36 x 24 in.
Collection of John and Kathryn Page.


Peter Hill '60

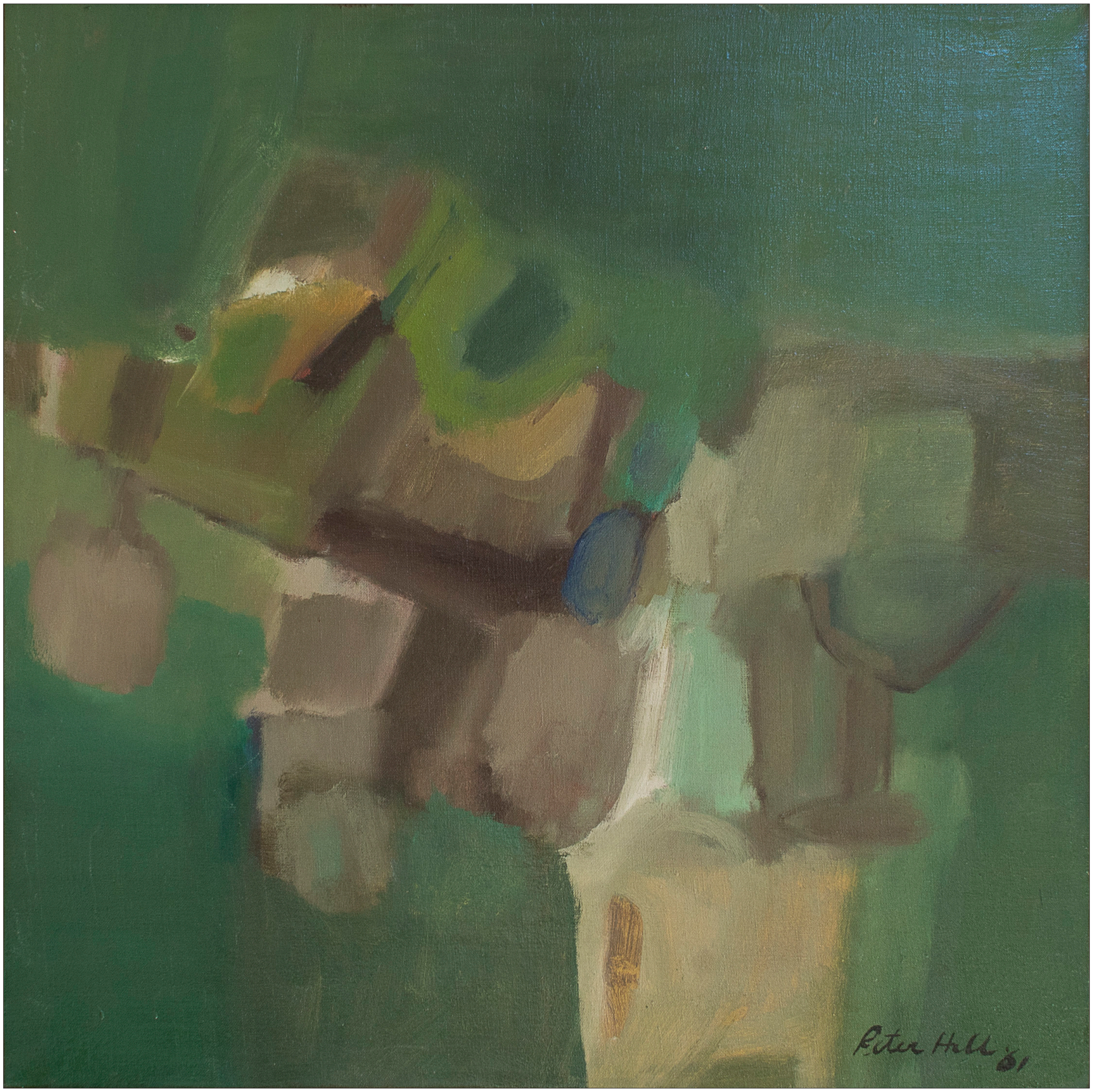
Untitled

1960. Oil on canvas, 38 x 26.5 in.
Collection of Jody Page.



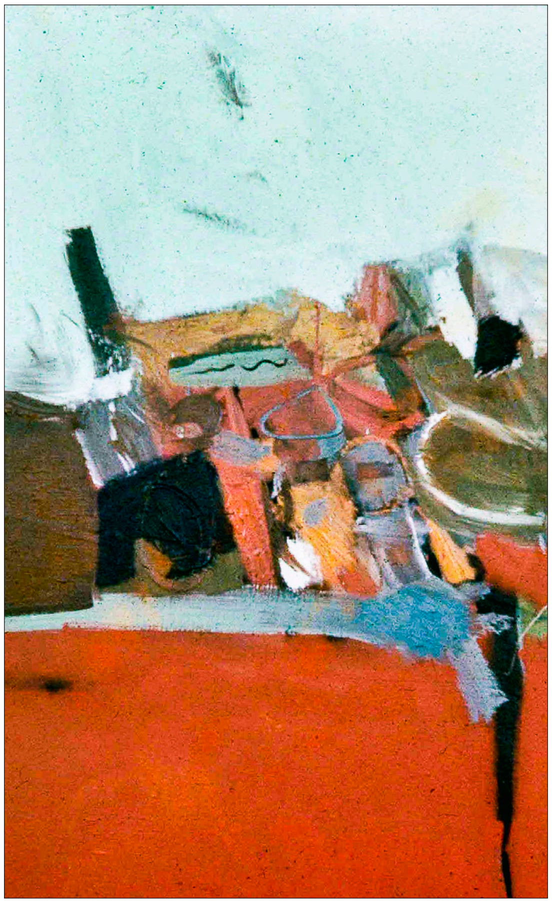
Title unknown

ca. 1961. Oil, possibly on board or treated paper.
Collection of Beverly Young.

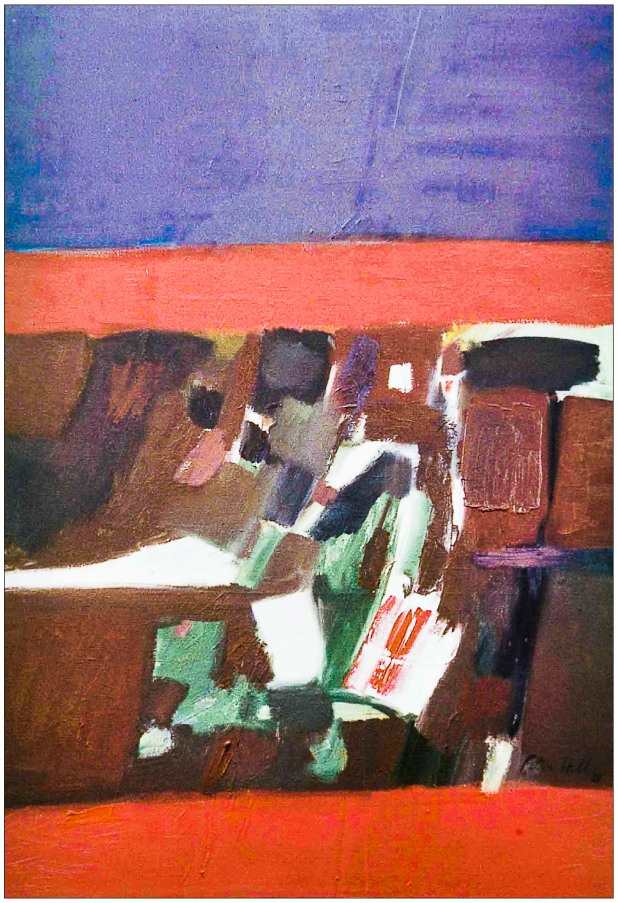

Peter Hall '61

Landscape

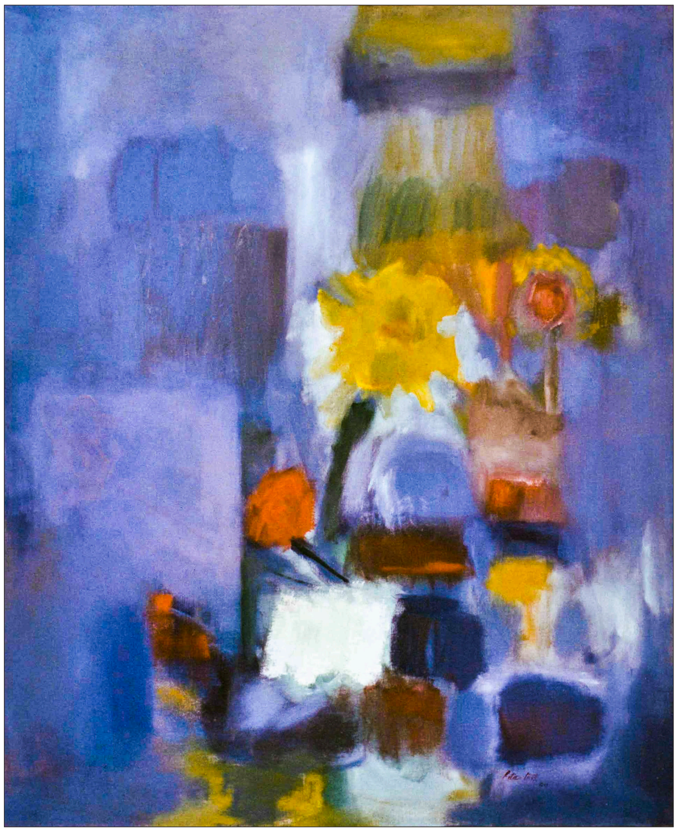
April 1961. Oil on canvas, 18 x 17.75 in.
Collection of Jody Page.



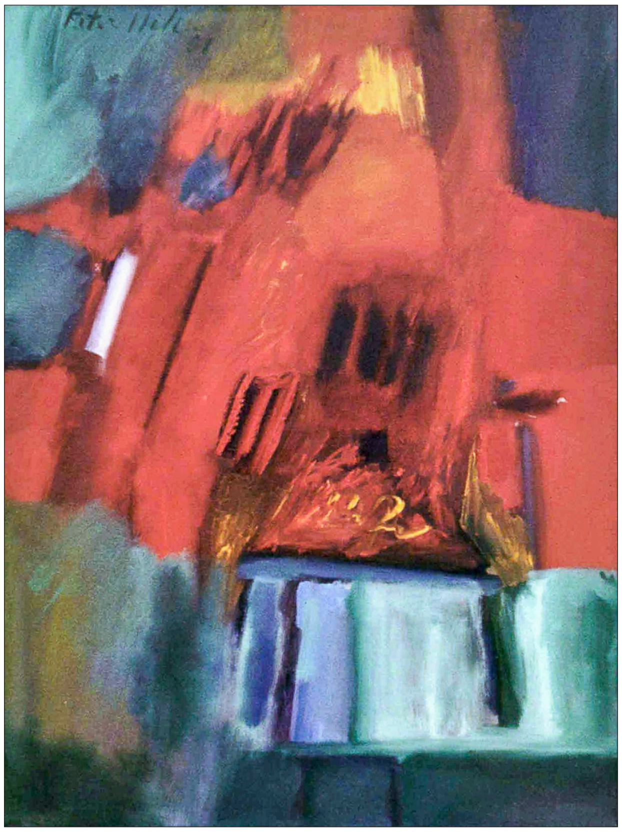
1960–4.



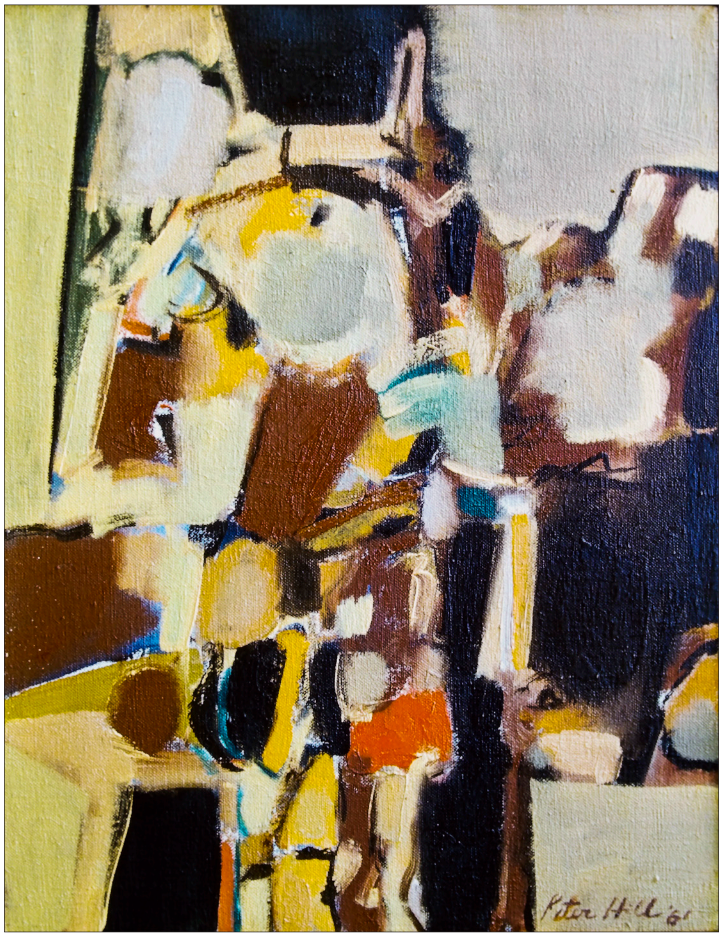
1961. Oil on canvas.



1960. Oil on canvas, 43 x 35.5 in.



1961. Oil on canvas.



1961. Oil on canvas. Collection of Mary Miller.

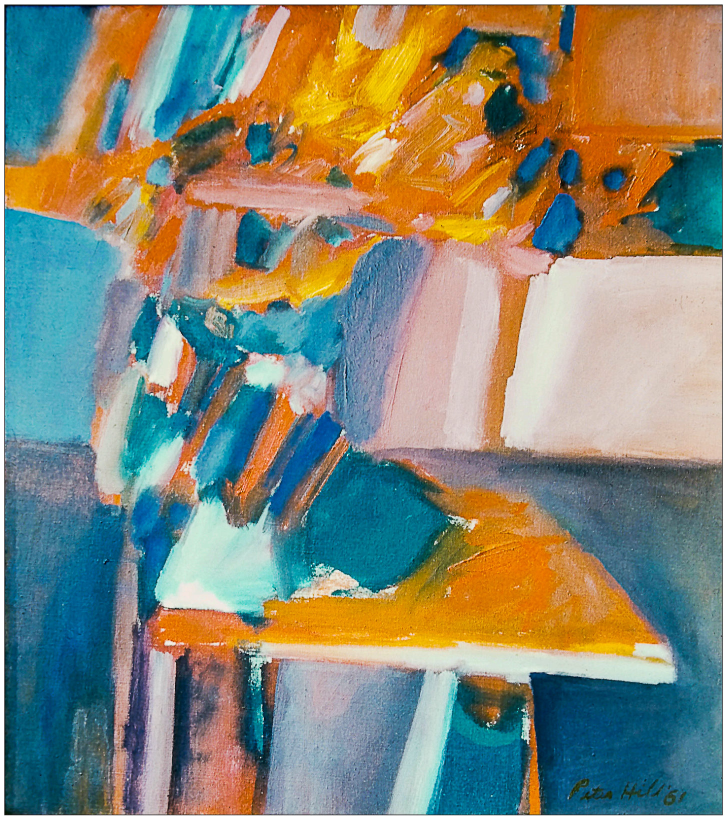


Table Study II, 1961. Oil on canvas, 20 x 18 in.

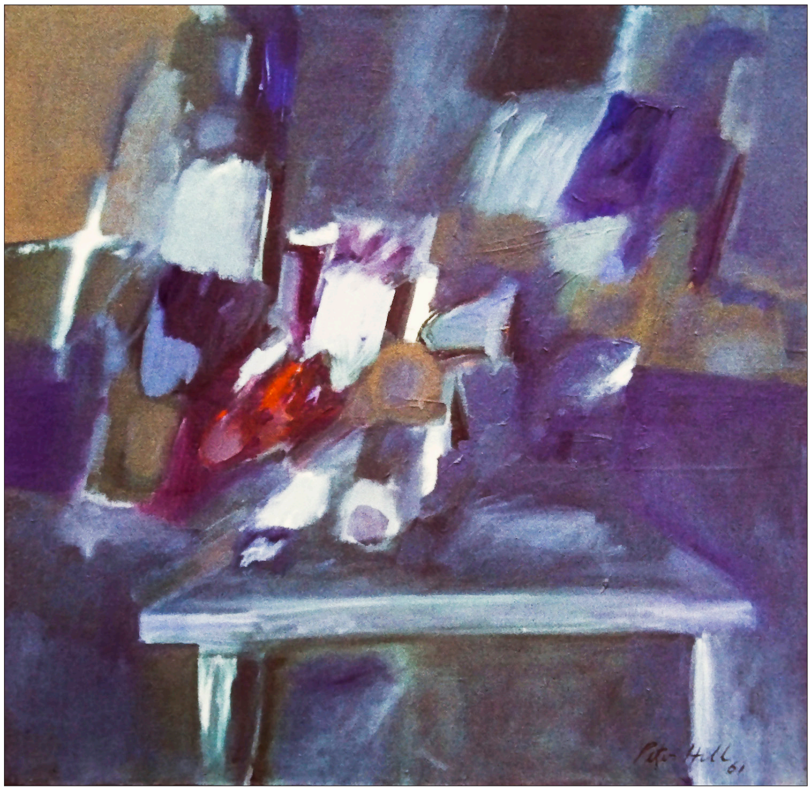
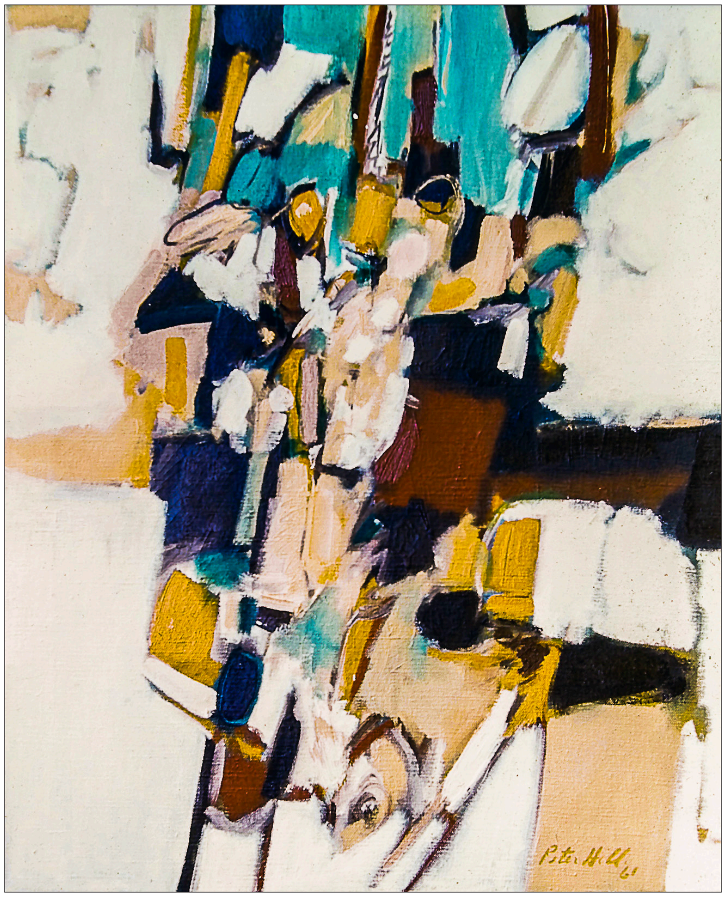
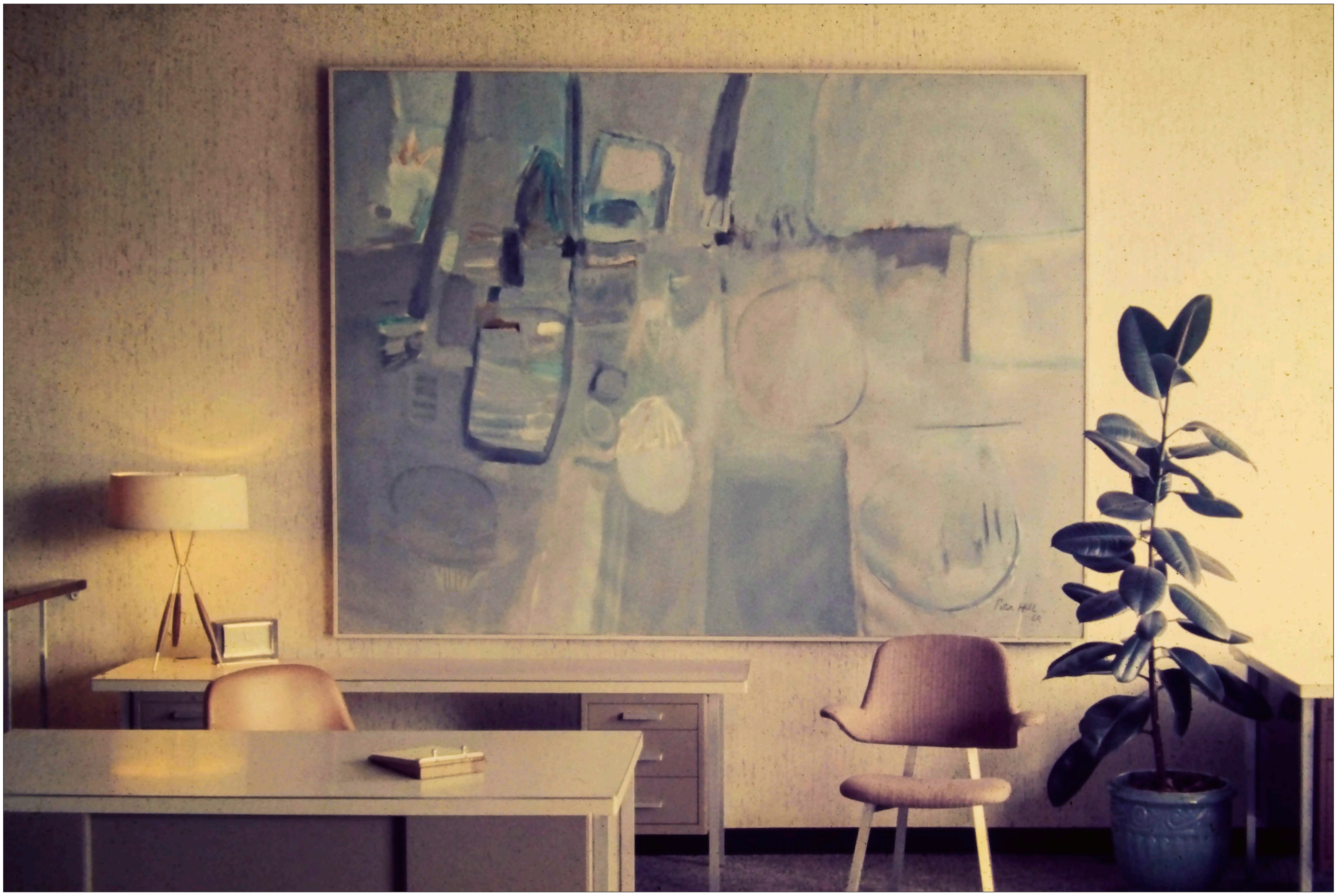


Table Study, 1961. Oil on canvas.

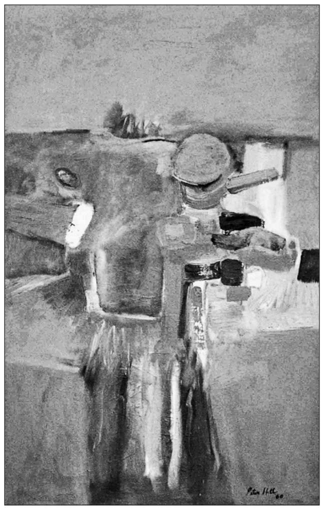


1961. Oil on canvas, 24 x 18 in.

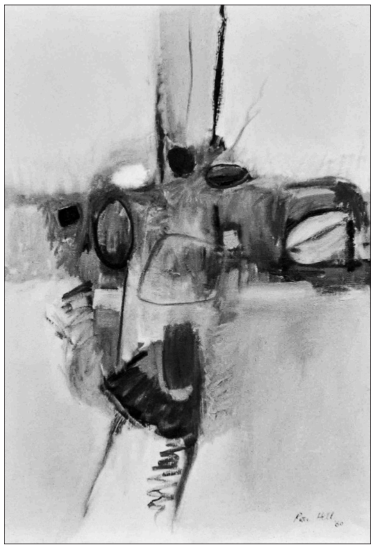


Composition

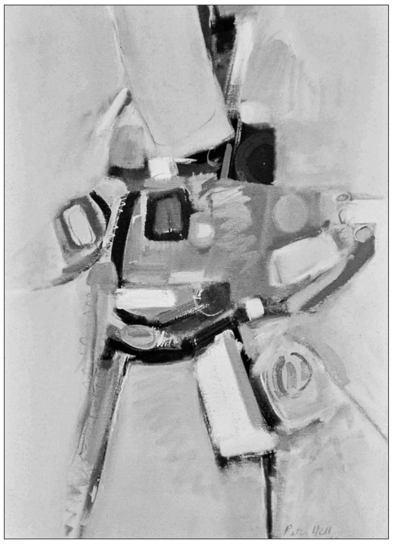
1960. Oil on canvas, 72 x 96 in.
Sold to the Shaw-Walker Furniture Company, Muskegon, Michigan.



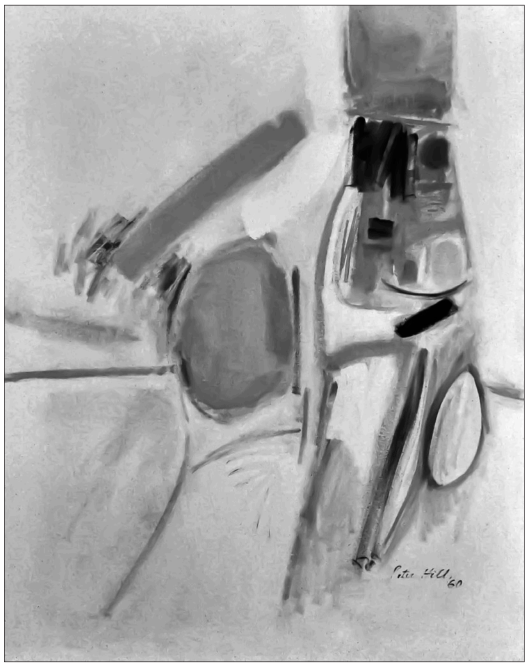
1960. Oil on canvas.



1960. Oil on canvas.



1960. Oil on canvas.



Summer Landscape, 1960. Oil.

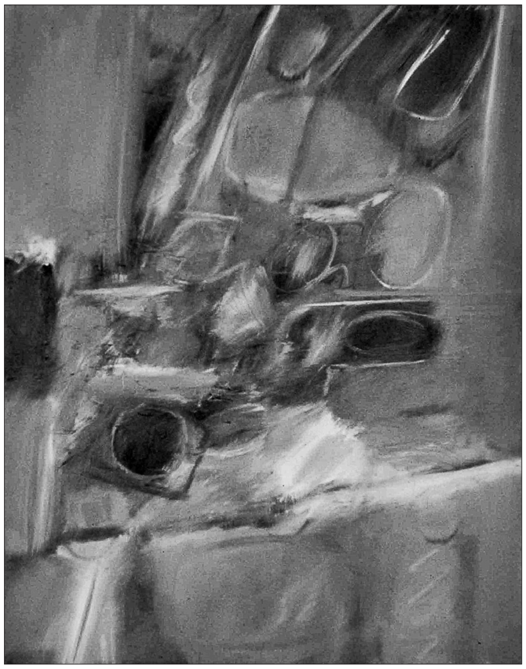
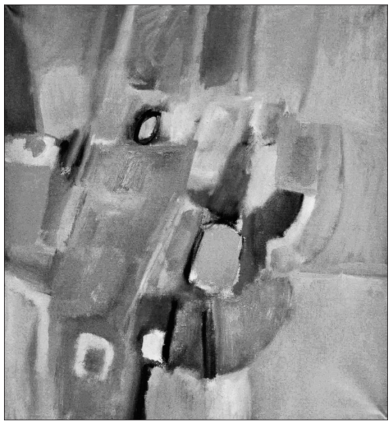
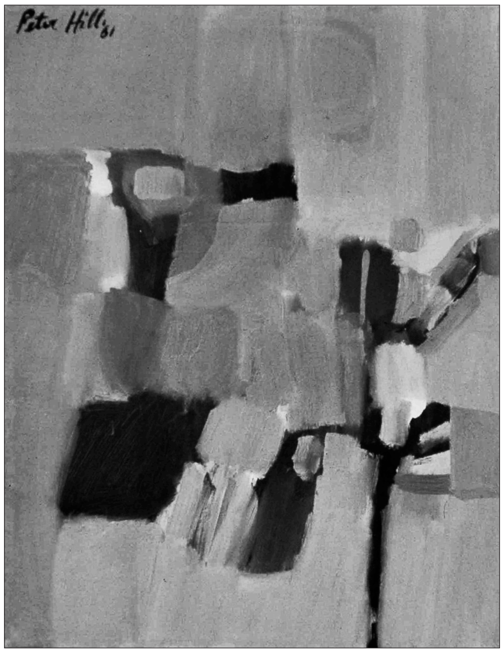


Table Study I, 1961. Oil, 48 x 36 in.

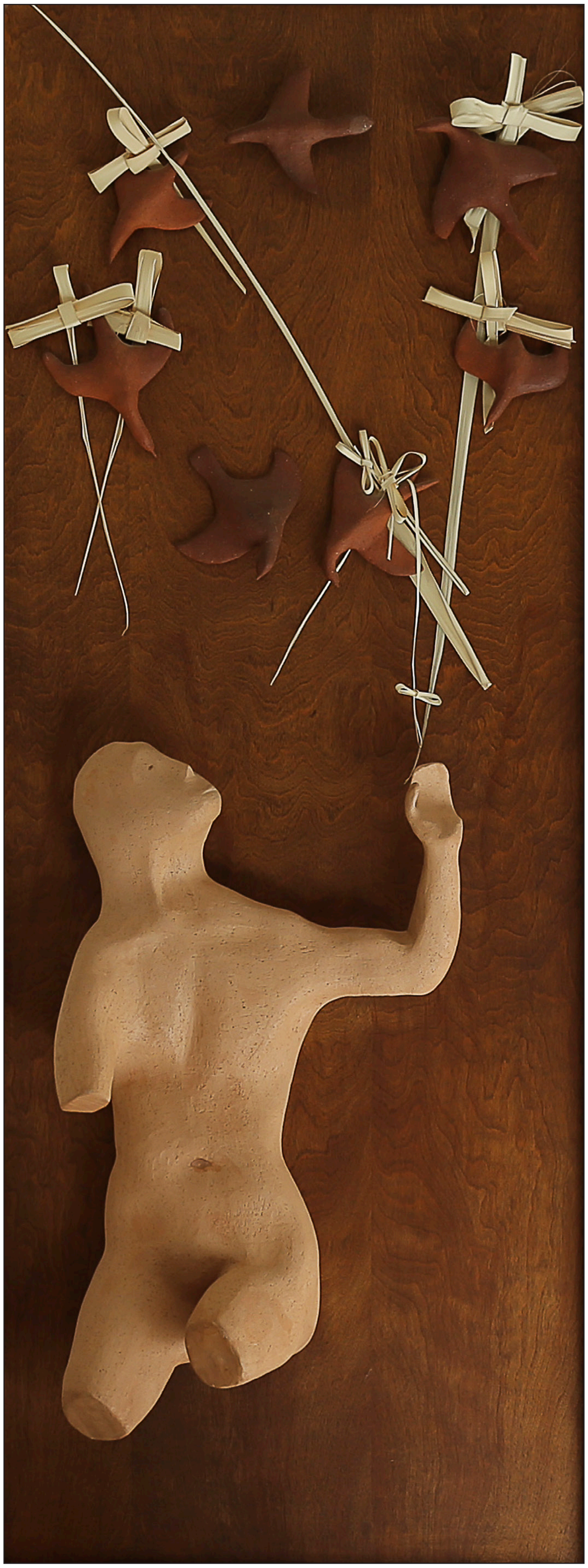


1961. Oil on canvas.

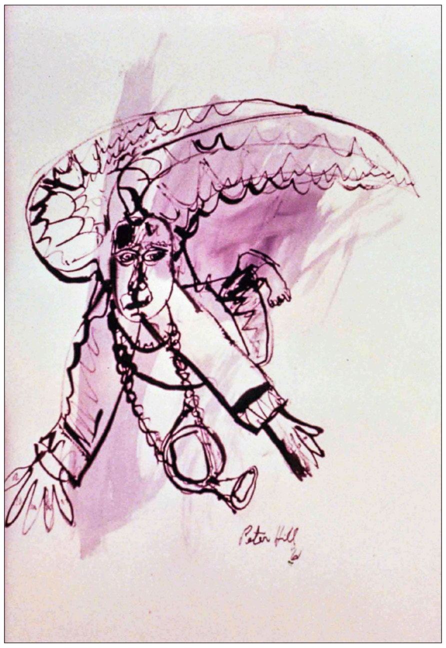
Interior, 1961. Oil on canvas.



1961. Oil on canvas.

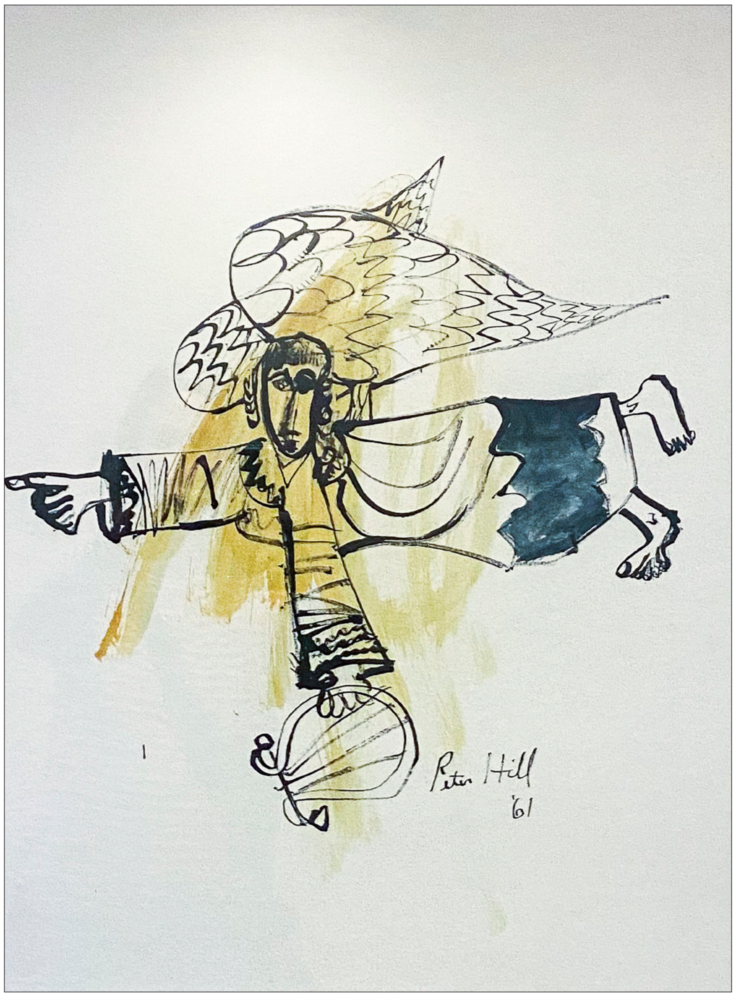


St. Francis, 1960. Clay and wood.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.



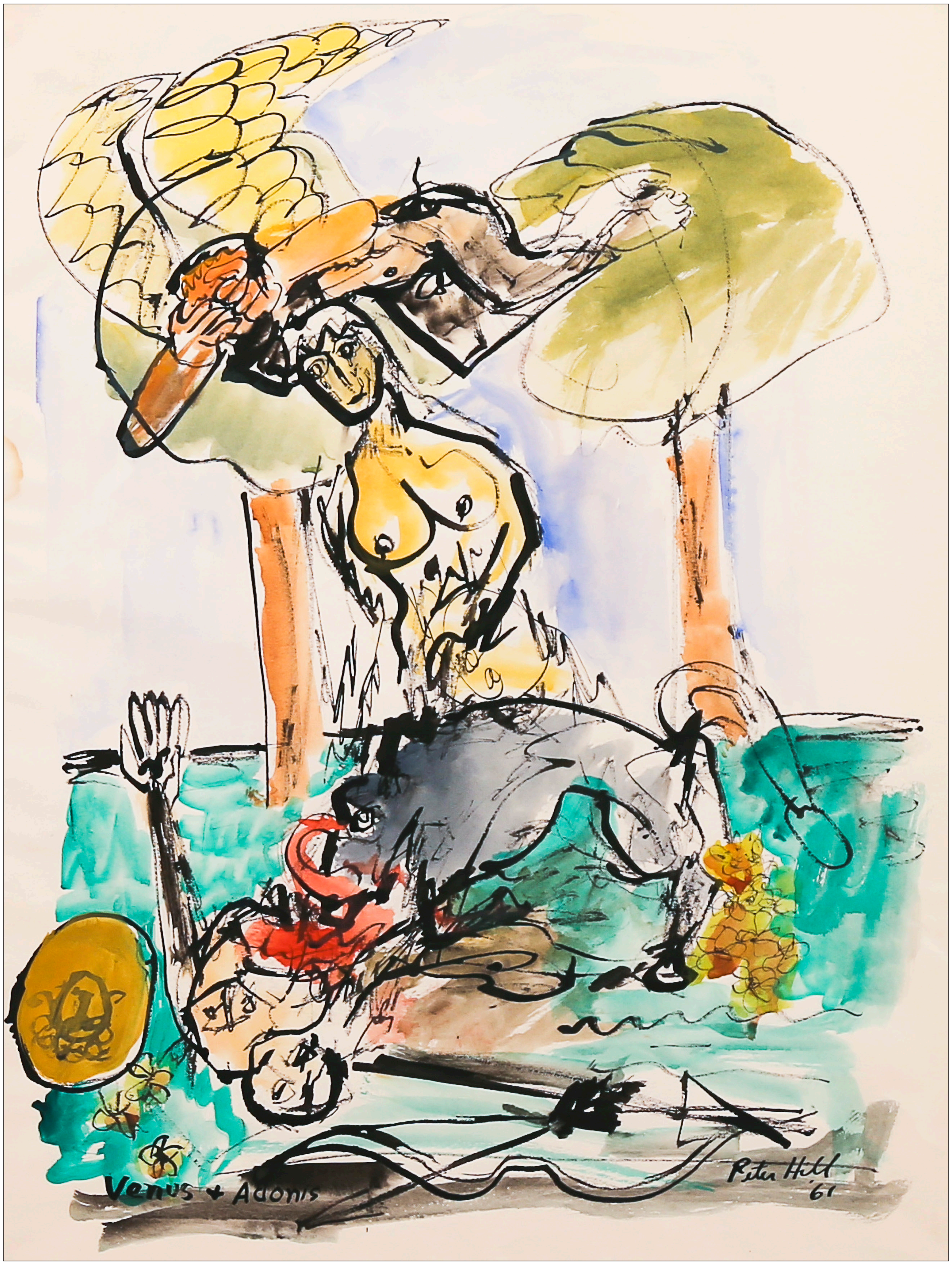
Peter Hill '61

Angel, 1961.
Ink and wash, 28.5 x 22.5 in.



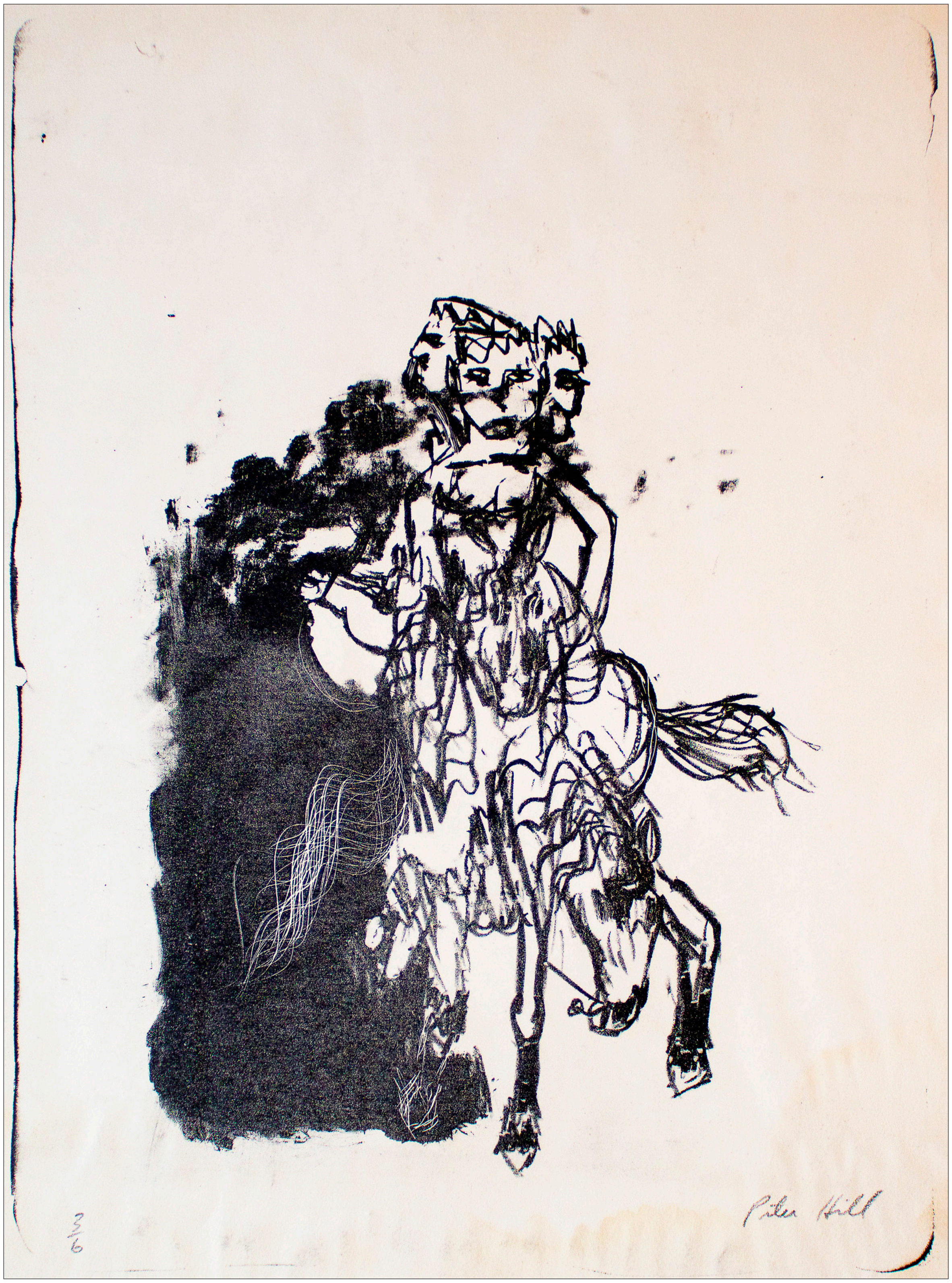
Peter Hill '61

Angel, 1961. Ink and watercolor on paper.
Collection of Kutak Rock.


Venus + Adonis
Peter Hill
'61

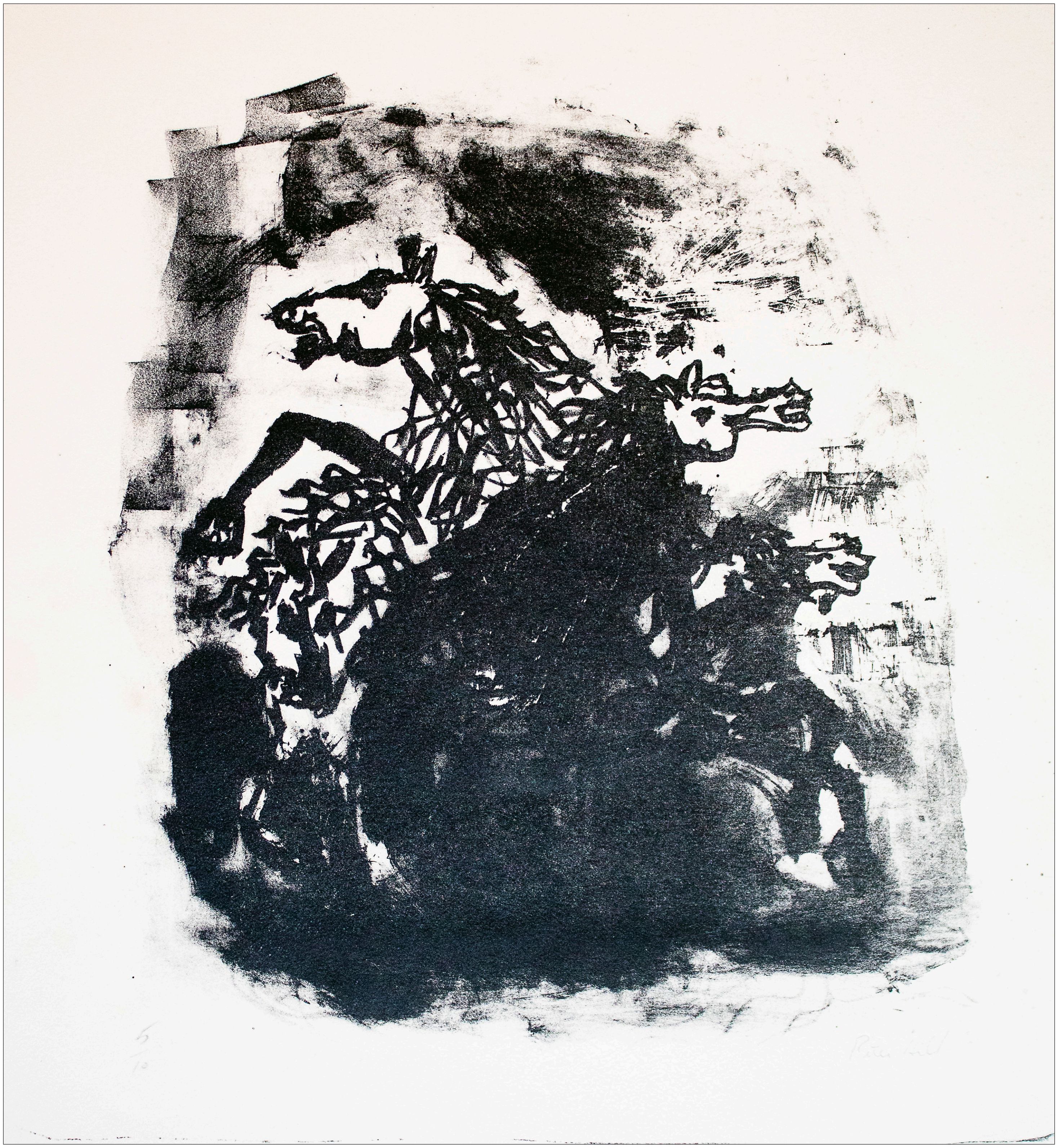
Venus and Adonis

1961. Ink and watercolor on paper, 24 x 18 in.
Collection of Jonathan and Maureen Hill.



Mythological Figure

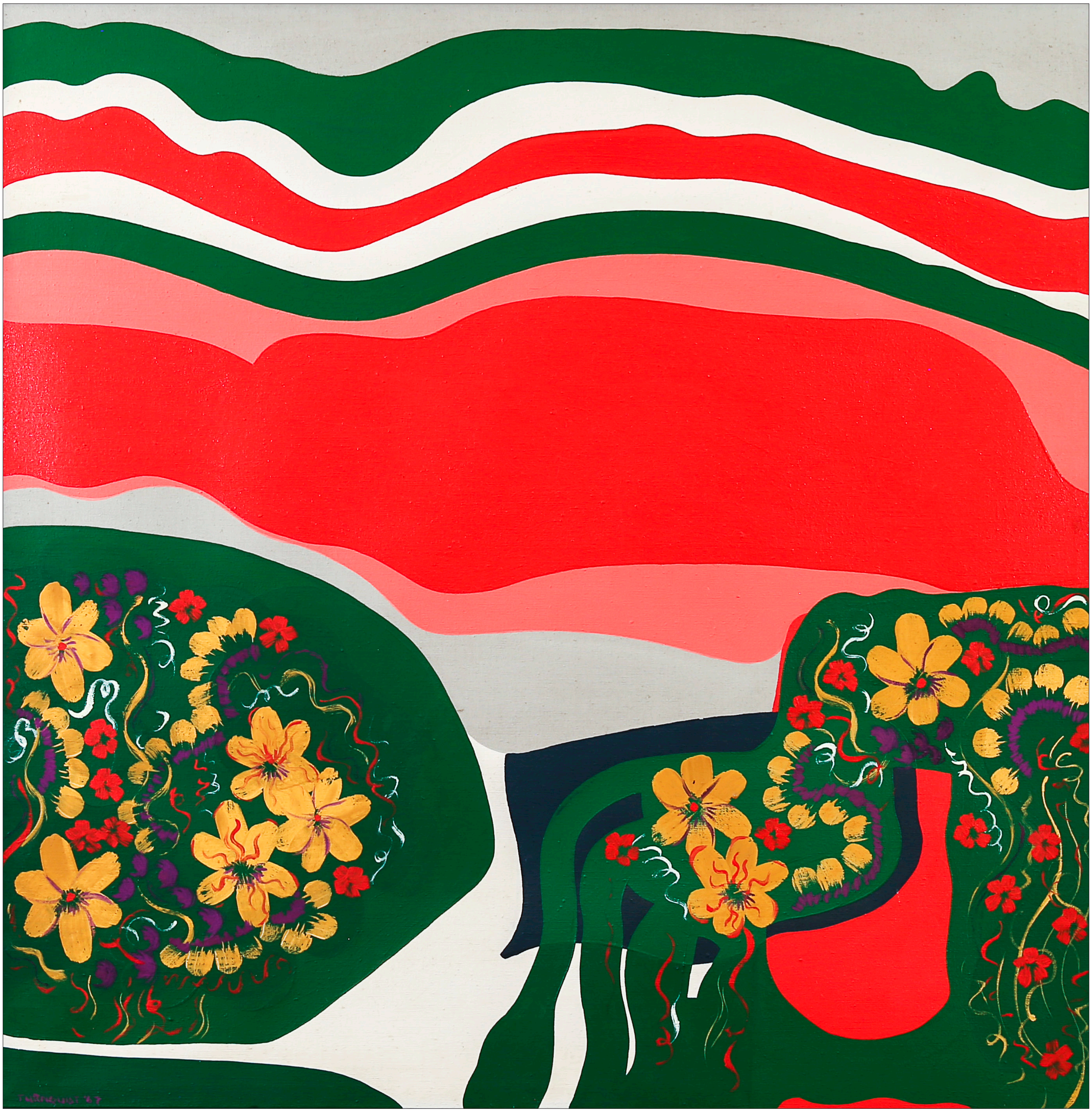
1958–61. Lithograph, 16 x 11 in.



Mythological Scene

1958–61. Lithograph, 12 x 11 in.

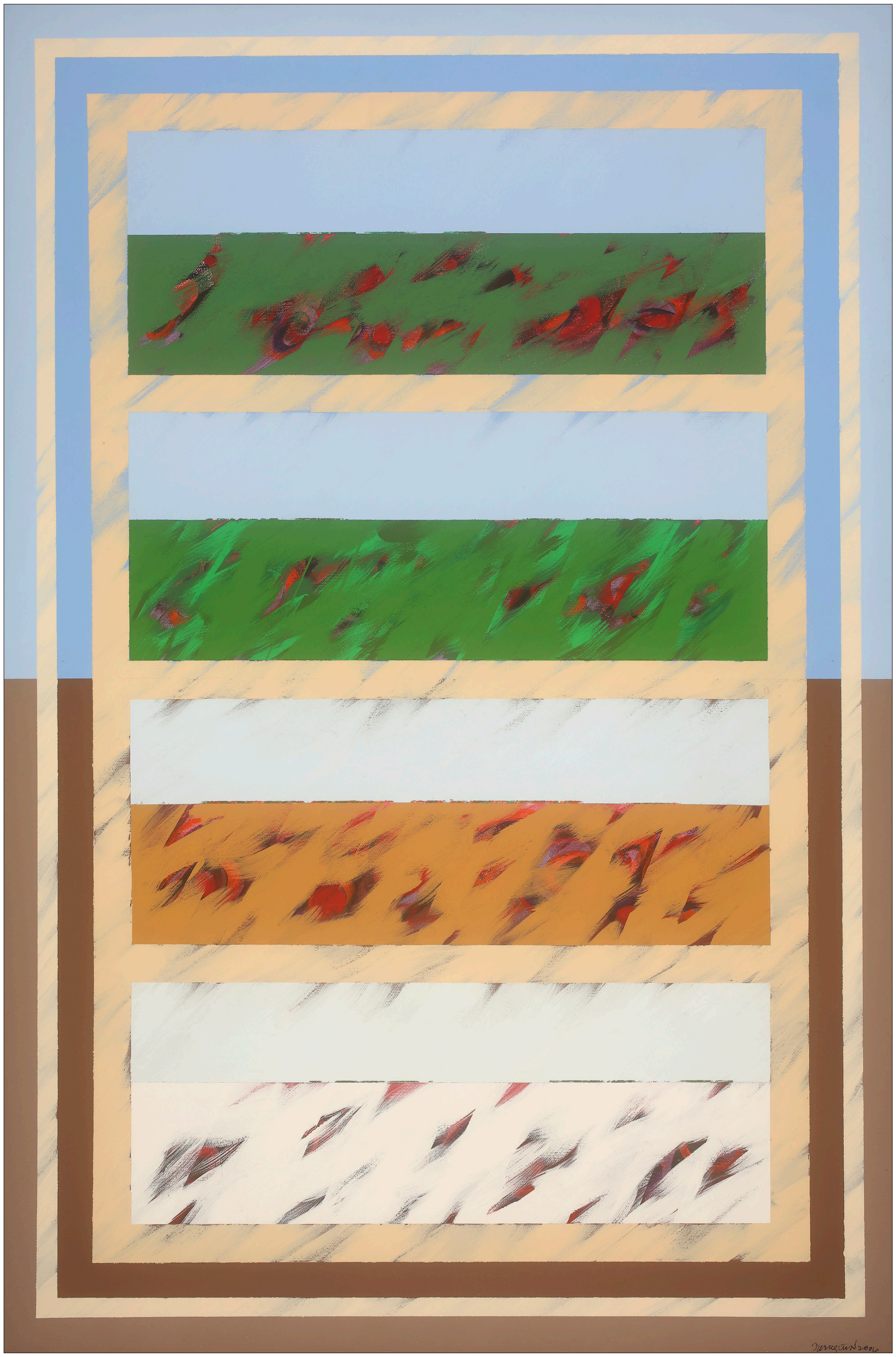
Remembrance by Toni Turnquist


TURNQUIST '67

Landscape

Toni Turnquist, 1967. Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 36 in.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.

Antoinette (Toni) Turnquist graduated from Omaha University in the early 1960s. She taught art in the Omaha Public School System (OPS) from 1964 to 2003. At South High School, she chaired the Fine Arts department. She joined OPS's administration in 2003, eventually becoming the district's Chief Operations Officer.



Toni Turnquist, *Vivaldi*, 2006.

Peter Hill was a superb painter, an outstanding instructor in both studio and art history classes, and a wise mentor. As an artist, his absolute mastery of color, surface, and design created image after image of glorious visual experience. As a teacher, his guidance was concise and to the point. He had no patience with laziness or posturing. His criticism could be stinging and his praise never failed to be overwhelmingly encouraging. And beyond all of these things, Peter was my dear, dear friend for sixty years.

—Toni Turnquist

Joslyn Museum of Art, Omaha, Nebraska

One-Man Show • January 14 to February 11, 1962

Omaha World-Herald, January 14, 1962

One-Man Show Artist Got Early Start; Skipped Choir

Peter Hill's interest in art began when as a youngster in Detroit he skipped choir practice to tour the nearby art institute.

Today, the 26-year-old University of Omaha art teacher will open his third one-man show of his paintings and drawings at Joslyn Art Museum—his first such show in Omaha.

Commented J. V. Blackwell, art department head at the university: "The abstract expressionism of Mr. Hill's work has, in his first one-main show, in Omaha, evolved into a personal statement which reflects the most advanced esthetic thinking today. In contrast to the 'action' painters who feel that the act of painting is more important than the painting itself. Mr. Hill clearly places the emphasis on the product of action—the painting."

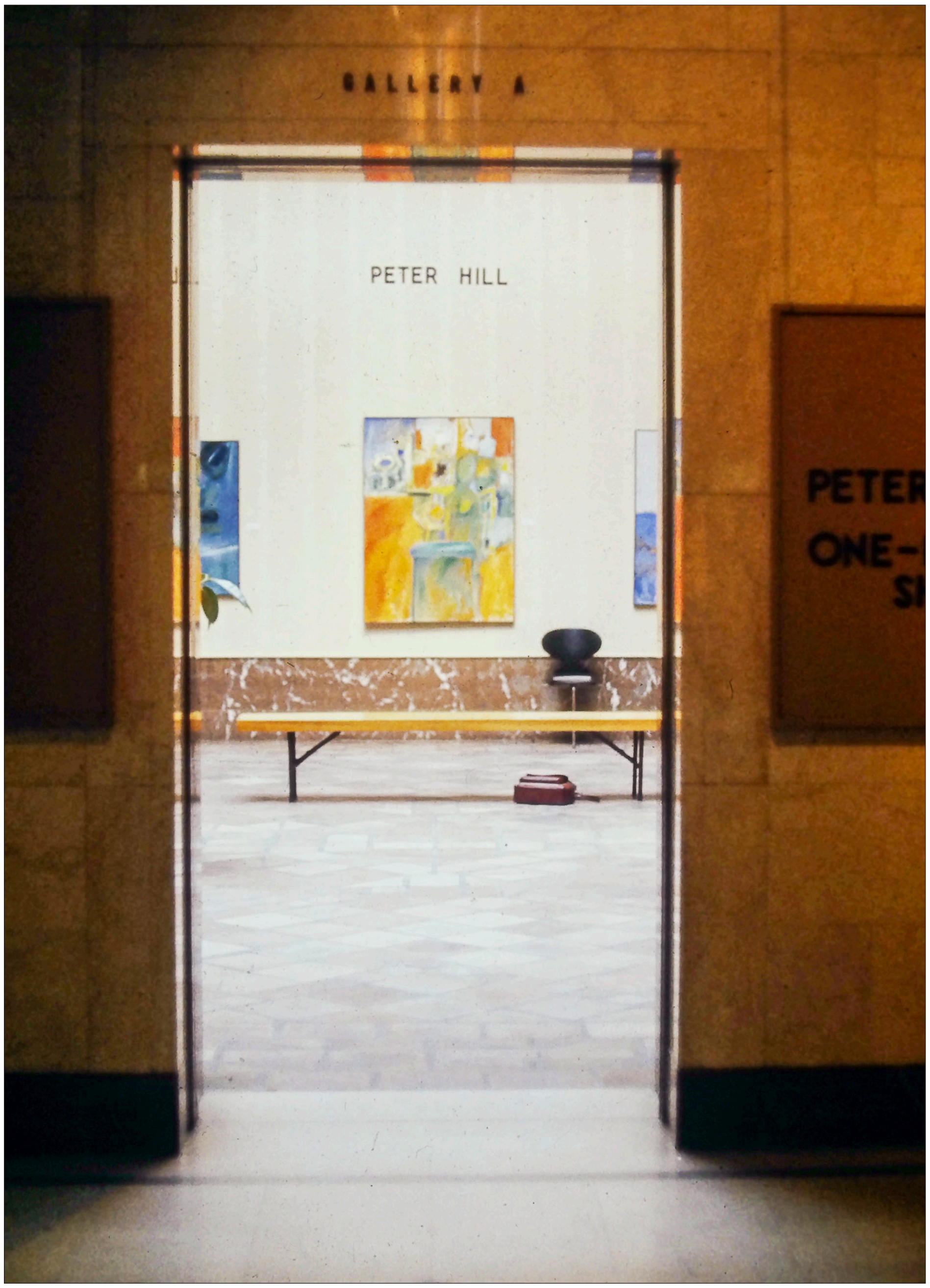
Born in Detroit, Mr. Hill studied at Albion College, Albion, Mich., and at Cranbrook Academy of Art just outside Detroit.

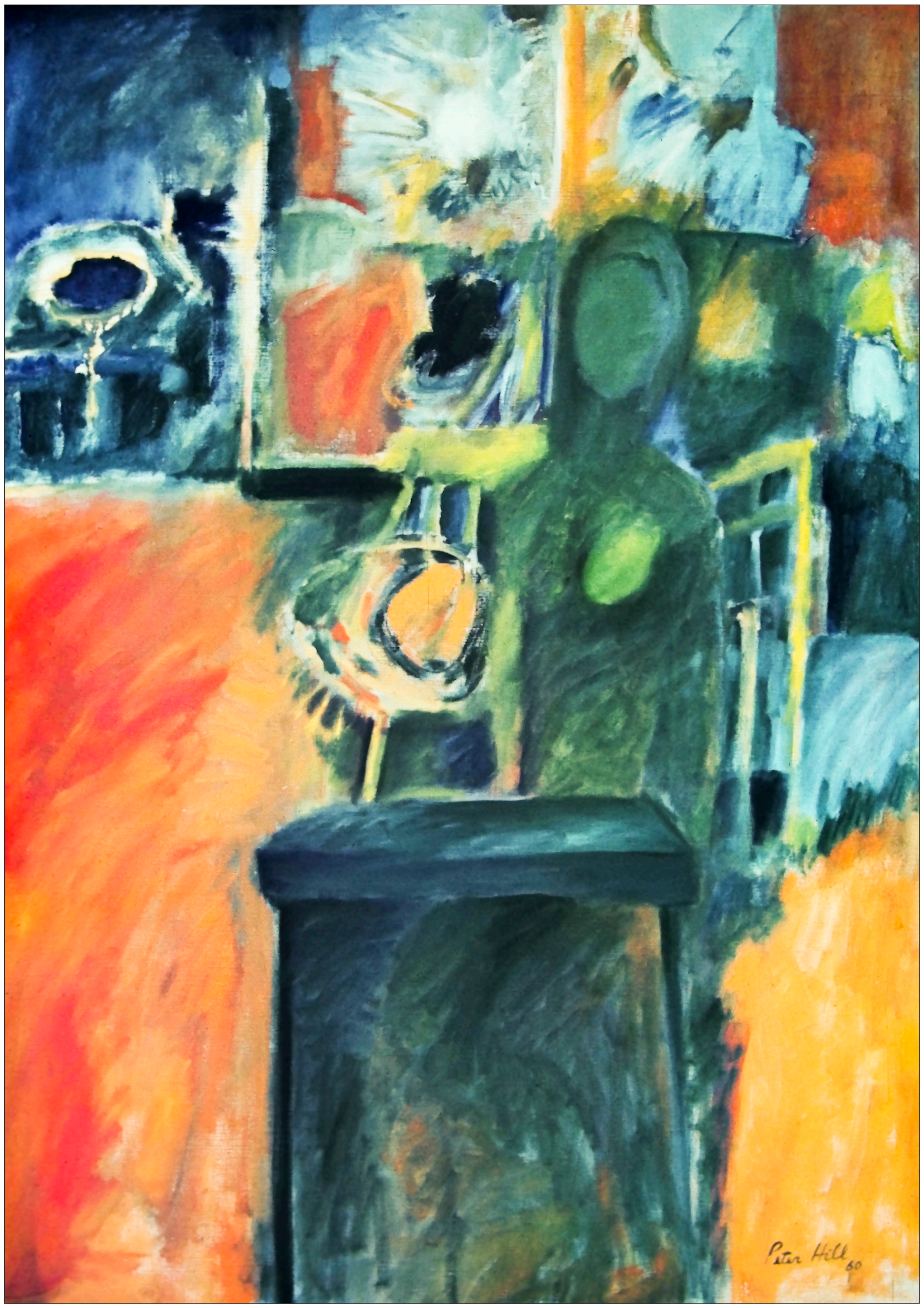
Four years ago he was headed for a teaching position interview in Texas when a call from University of Omaha President Milo Bail brought him to Omaha.

Mr. Hill also traced his art interest to the influence of his mother, "who had books on art around the house; she hand-wove fabrics."

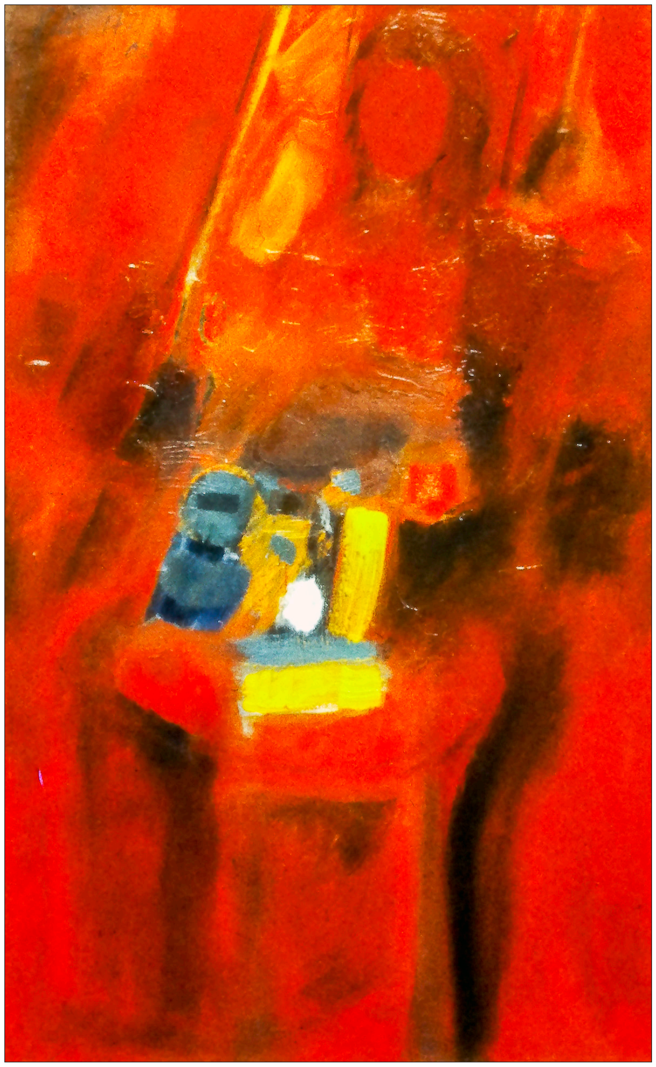
His work has been exhibited at shows in Kansas City, Sioux City, Lincoln, Springfield, Mo., and Denver.

One-man shows were started at Joslyn during the last year to give recognition to artists of the Omaha area.



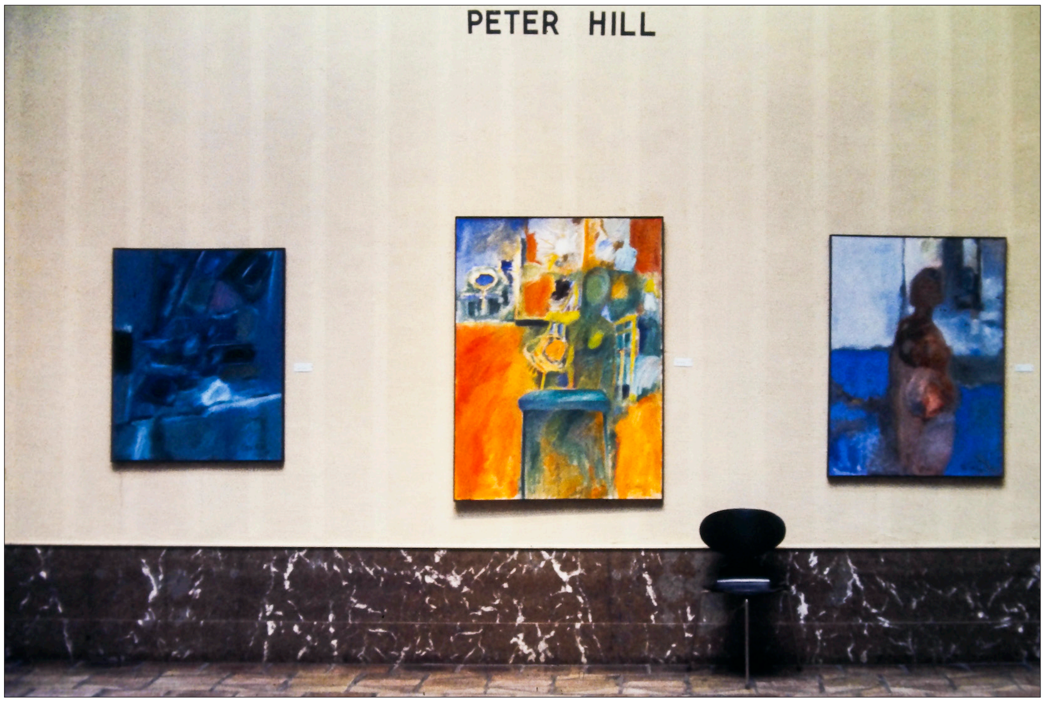


Nude in Interior, 1960. Oil on canvas.

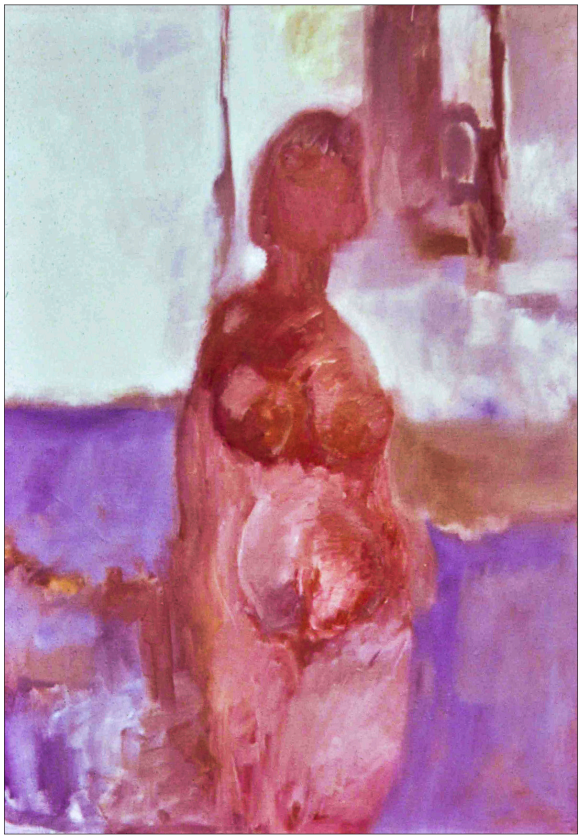


Girl at Table, 1961. Oil on canvas.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

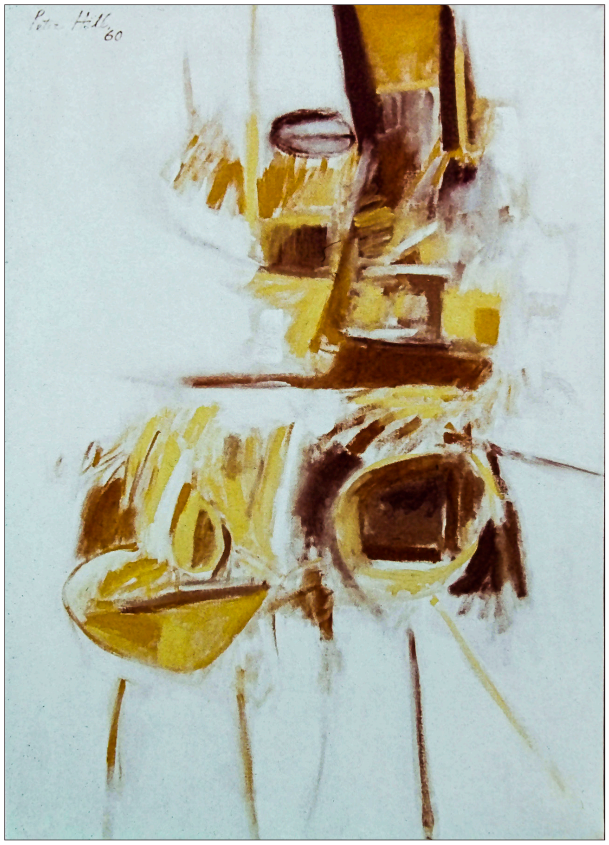
Joslyn Museum of Art • January 14 to February 11, 1962



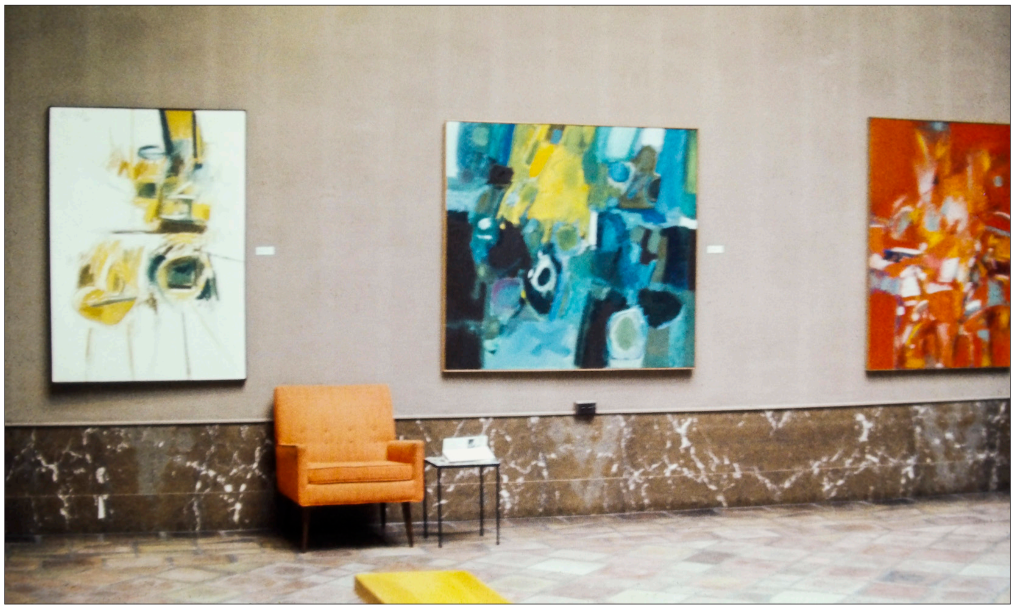
Left to right: *Table Study I, Nude in Interior, Red Nude*



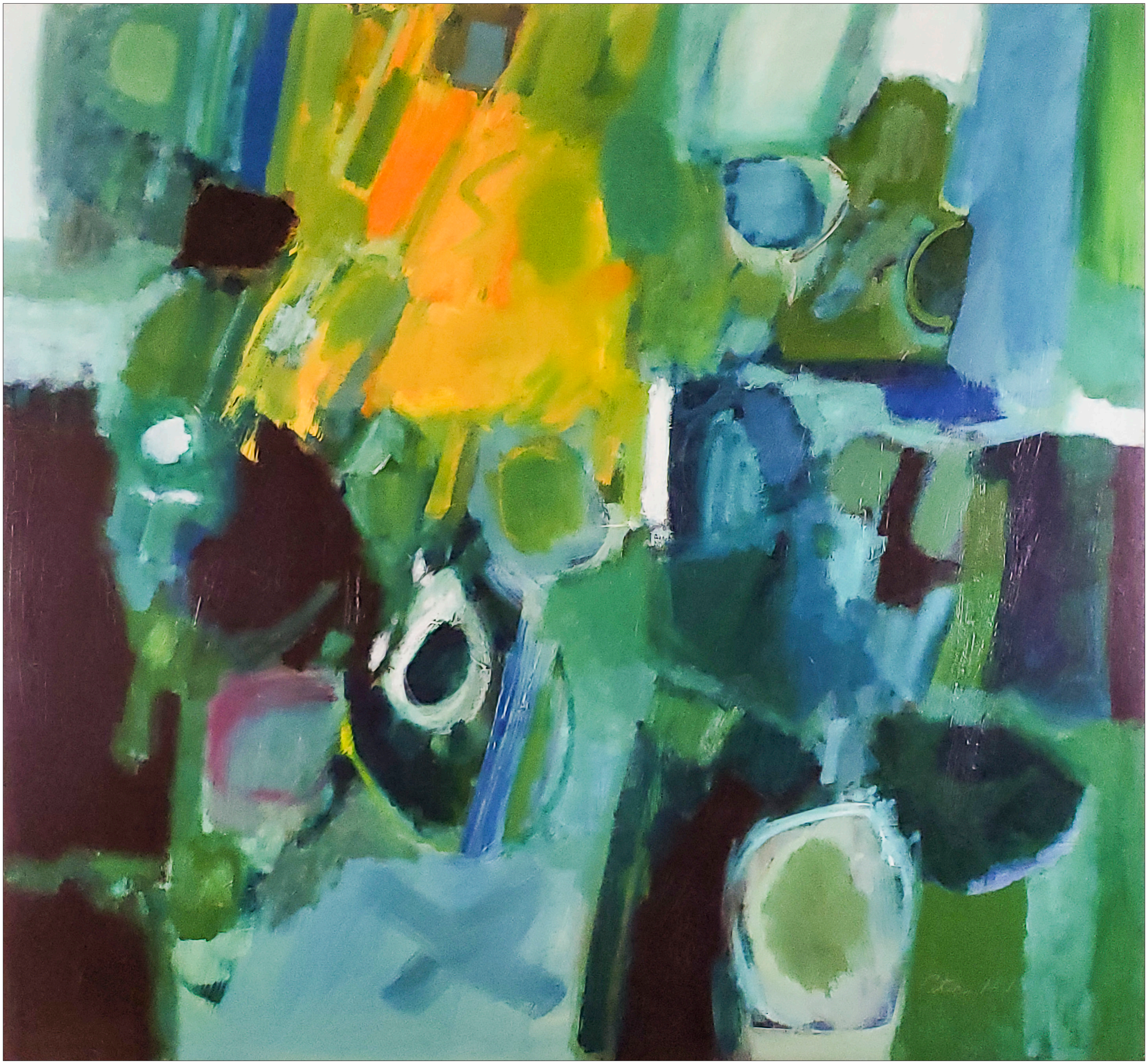
Red Nude, 1961. Oil on canvas, 46 x 34 in.



Summer Still Life, 1960. Oil on canvas.

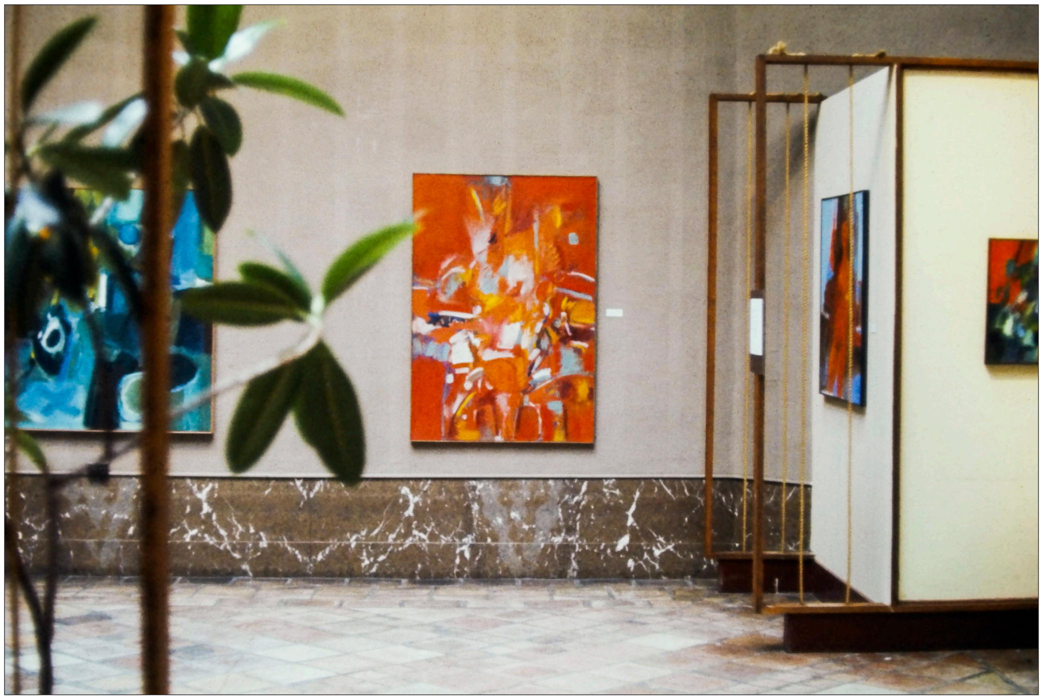


Left to right: *Summer Still Life, Early Autumn, Red Figures*

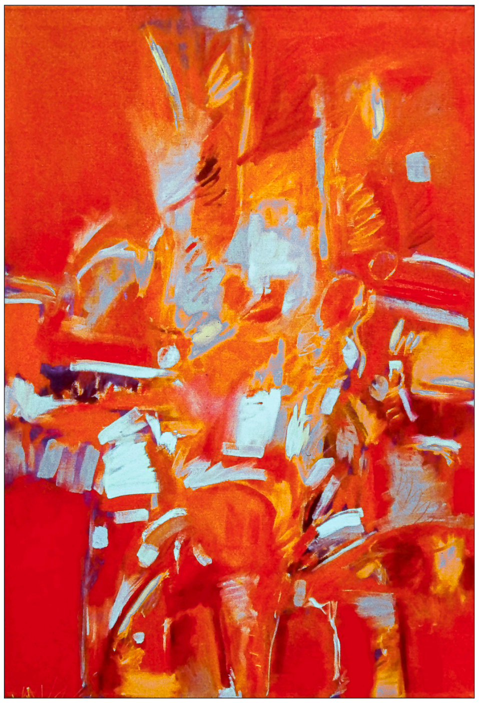


Early Autumn

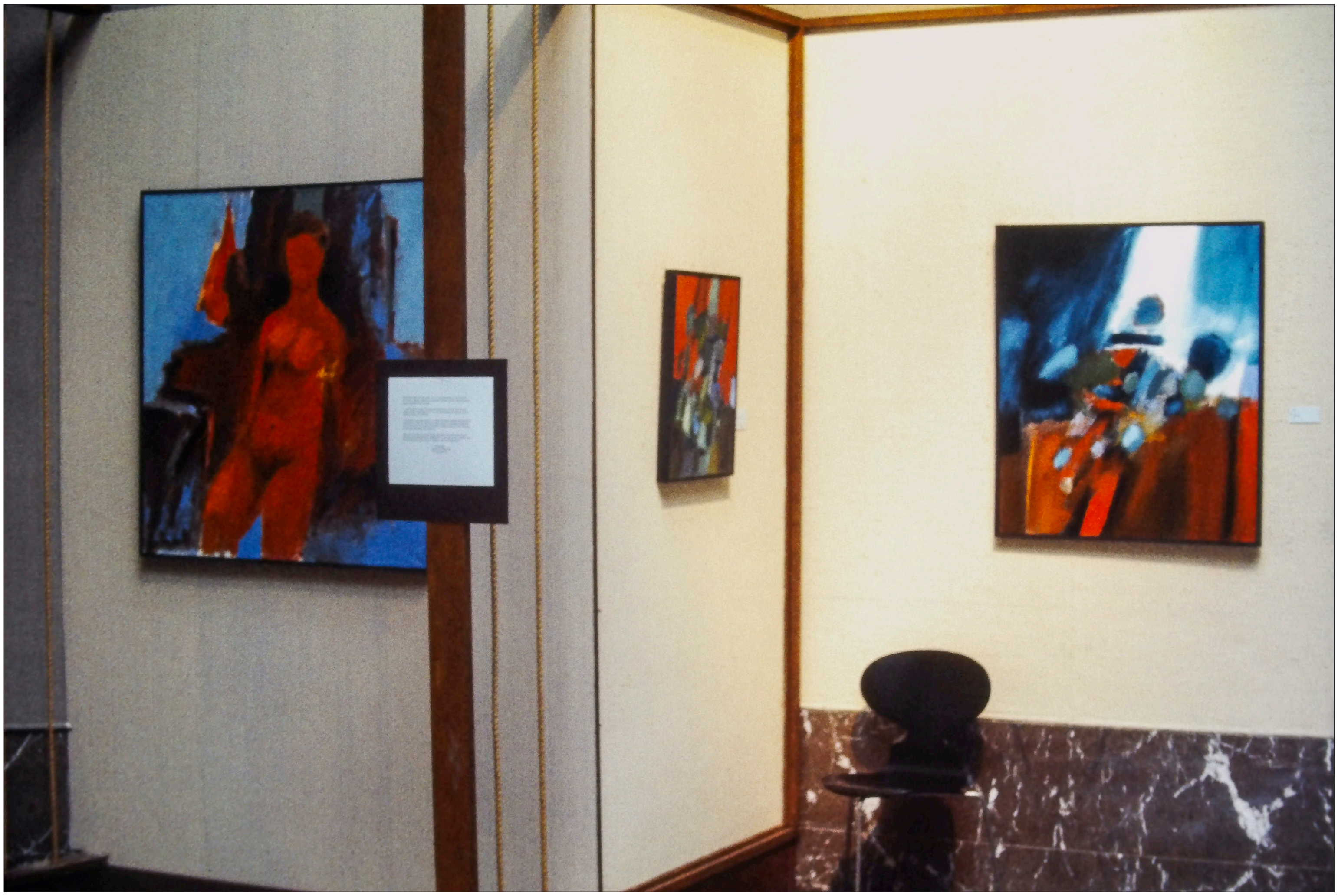
1961. Oil on canvas, 53 x 56 in.
Collection of John and Barbara Musselman. Photograph by Alec Paul.



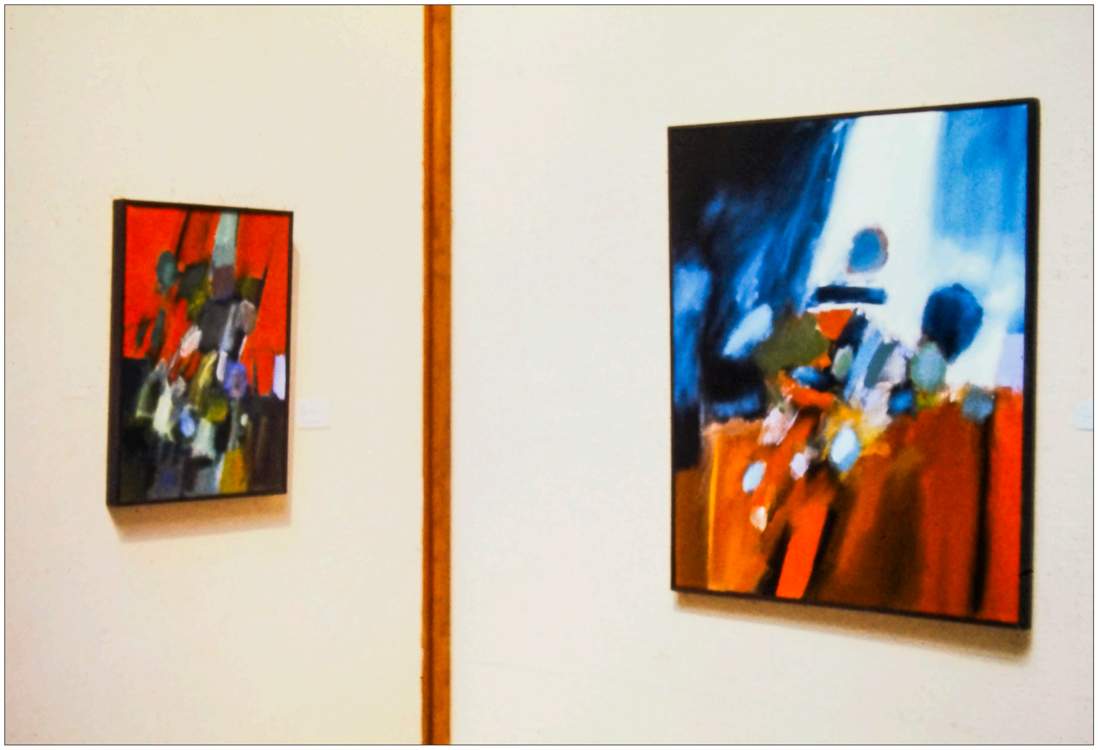
Left to right: *Early Autumn*, *Red Figures*, *Seated Nude*, unknown



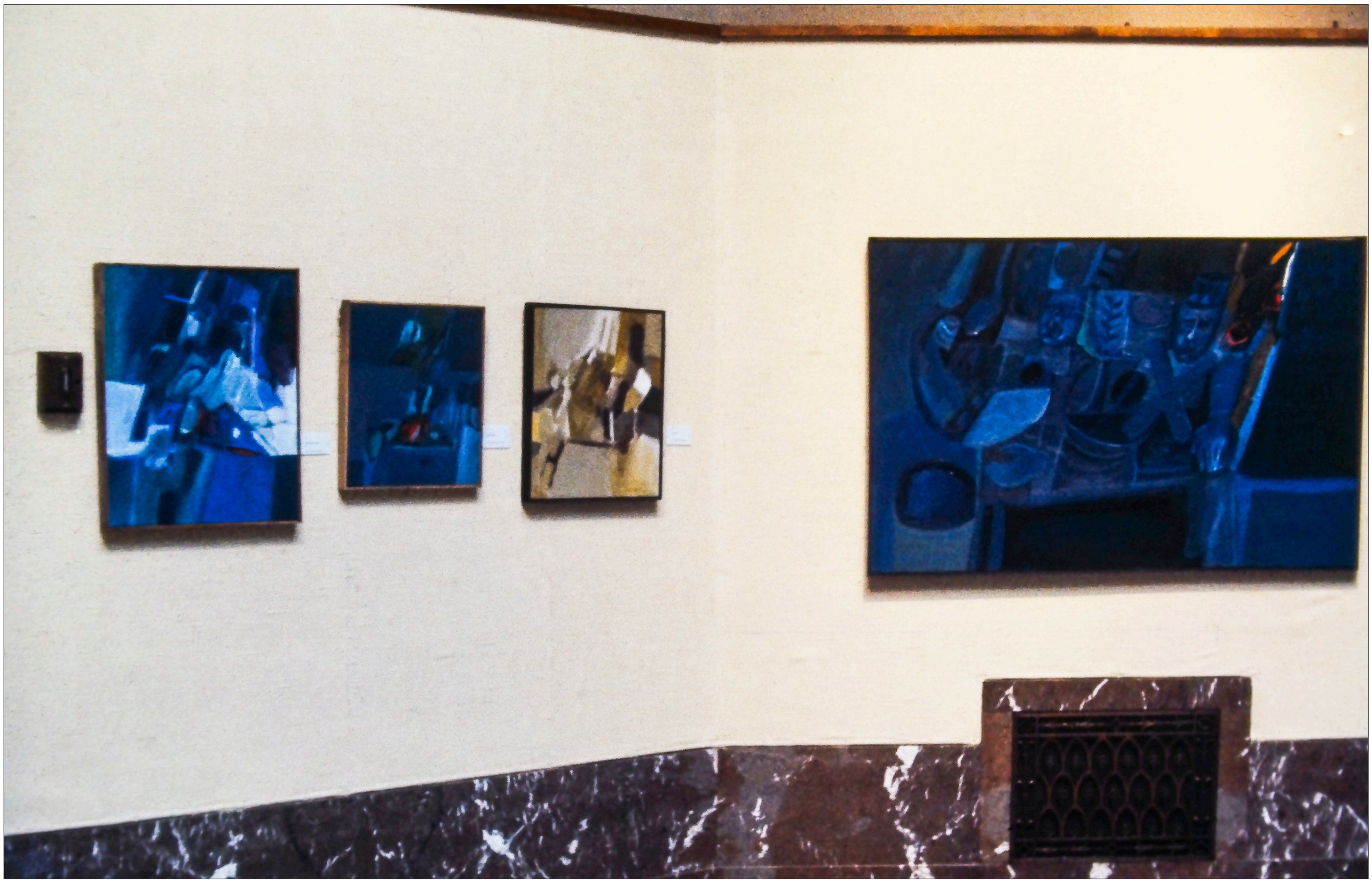
Red Figures, 1960. Oil on canvas.



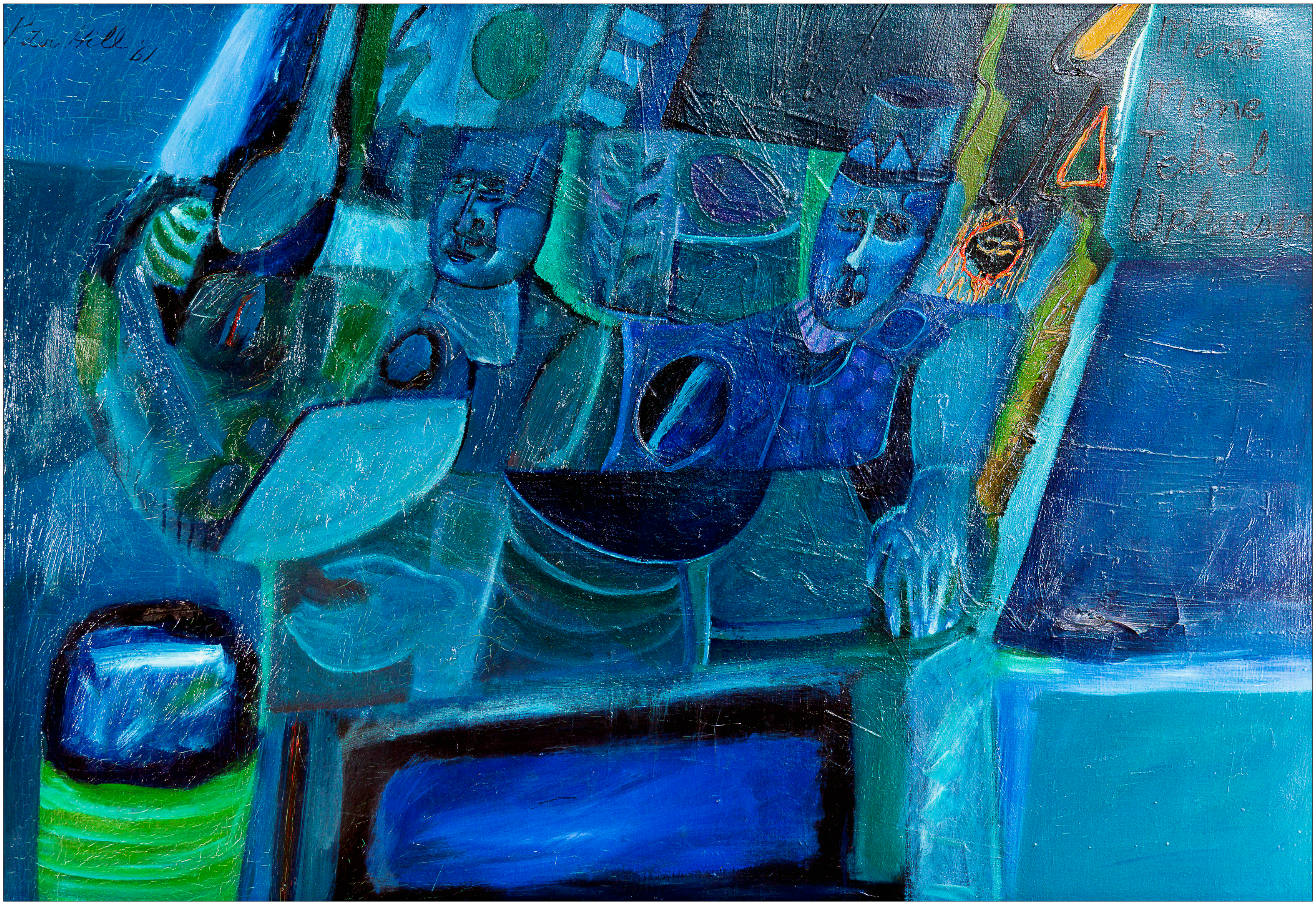
Left to right: *Seated Nude*, unknown, *Belial*

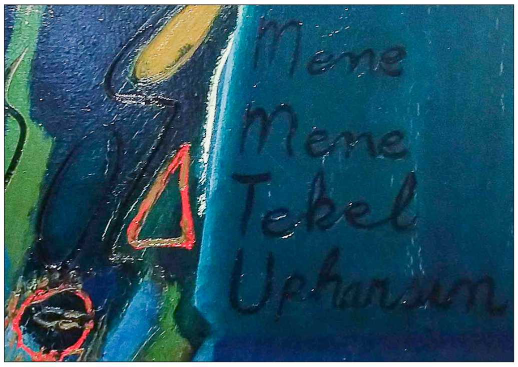


Left to right: Unknown, *Belial*



Left to right: *Interior Study, Table Study, Interior, Belshazzar's Feast*

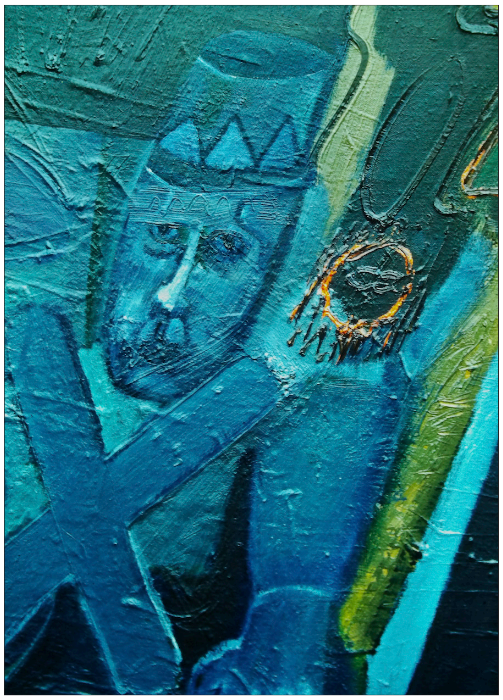




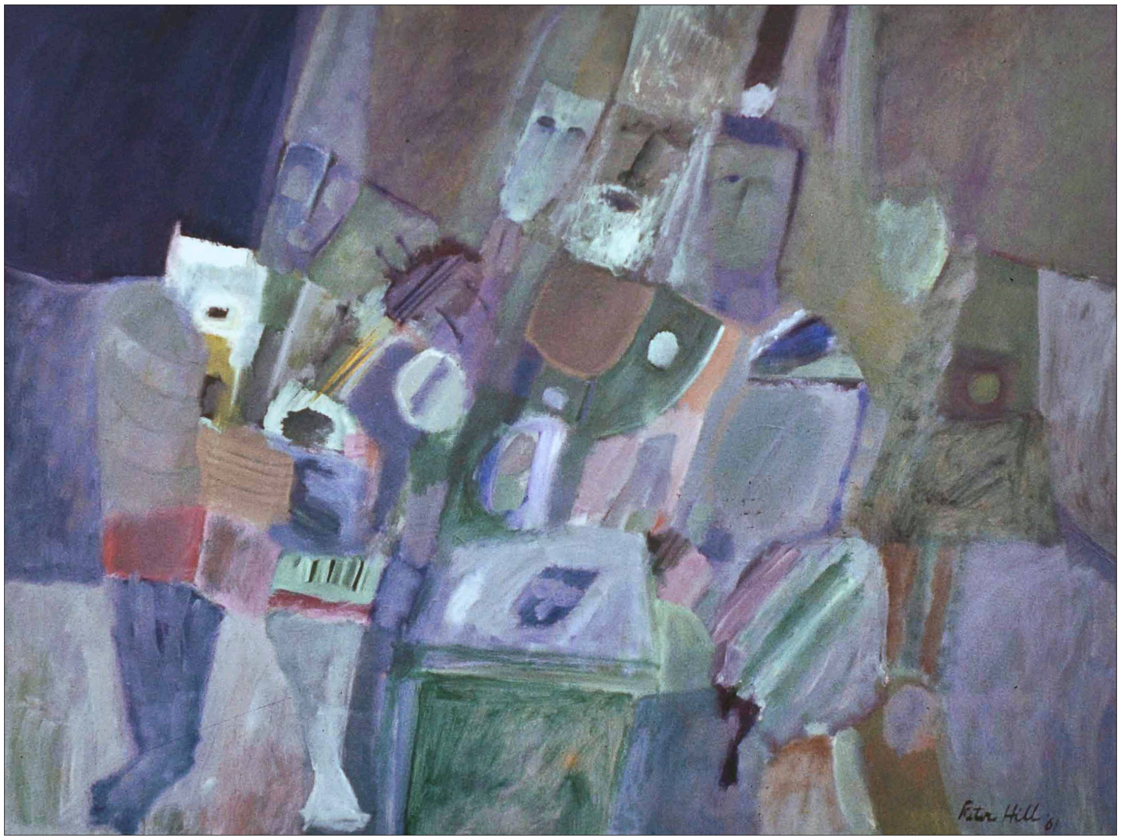
Belshazzar's Feast (detail)

Belshazzar's Feast

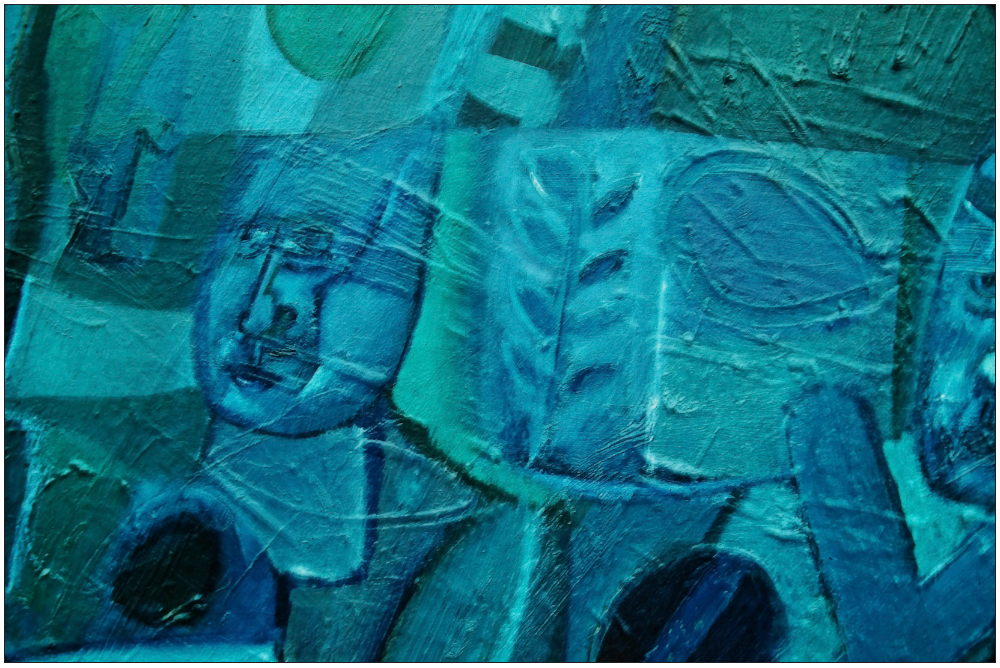
1961. Oil on canvas.
Collection of Eddie Wintroub.



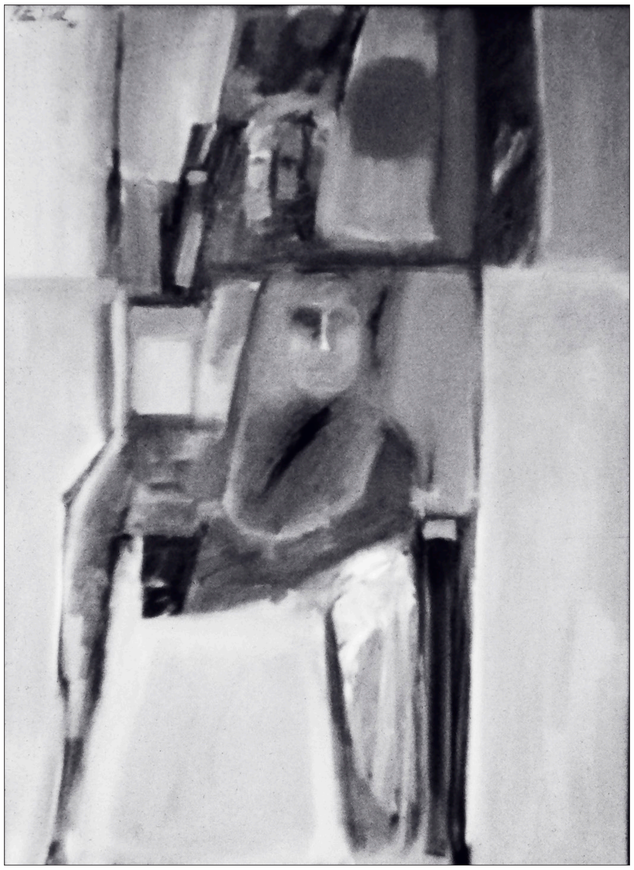
Belshazzar's Feast (detail; 1962 photo)



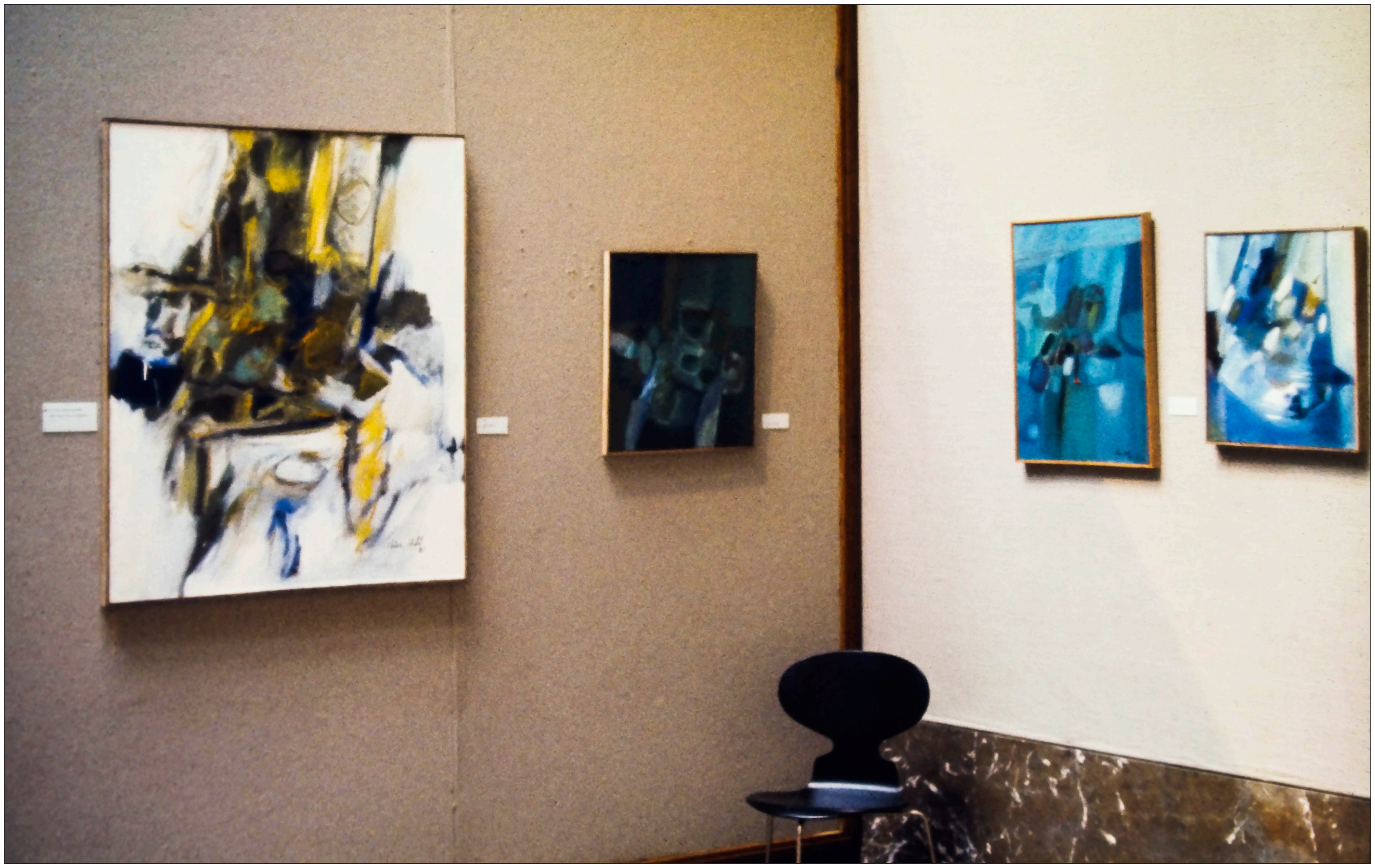
Troubadour, 1961. Oil on canvas.



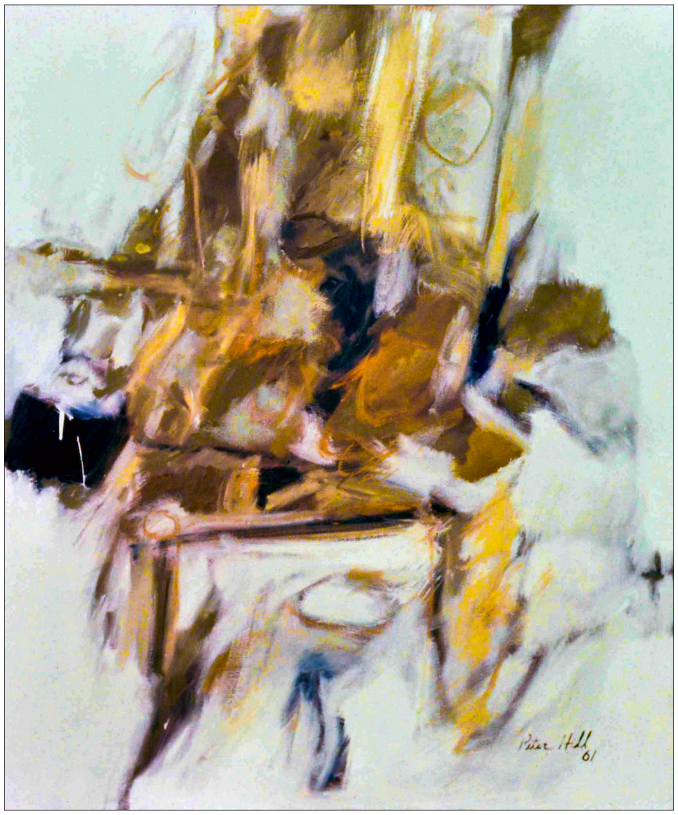
Belshazzar's Feast (detail; 1962 photo)



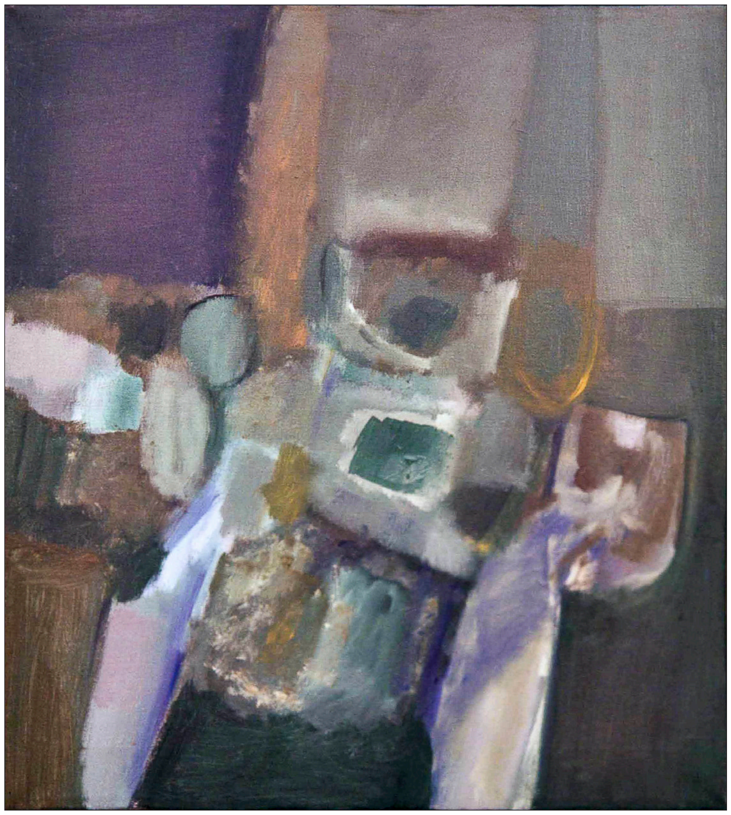
The King and the Commuter, 1961.
Oil on canvas, 56 x 41 in.



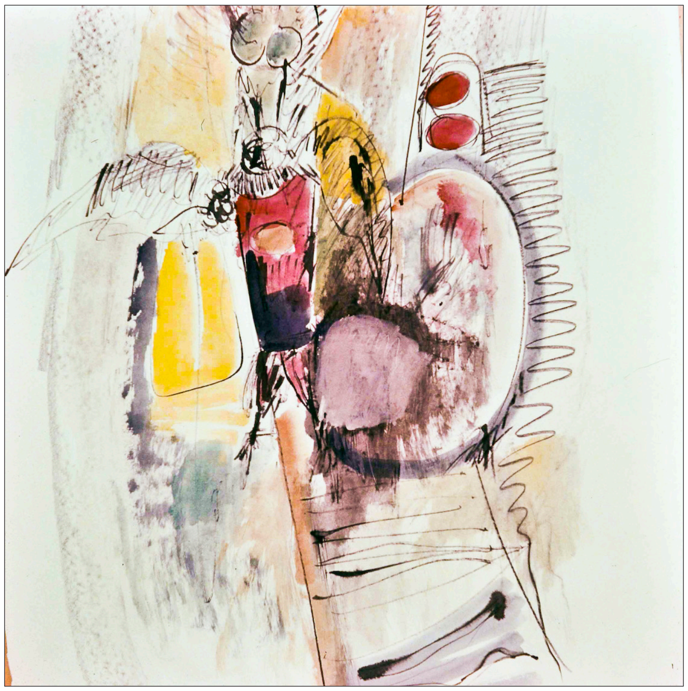
Far right: *Table Study*. All others unknown.



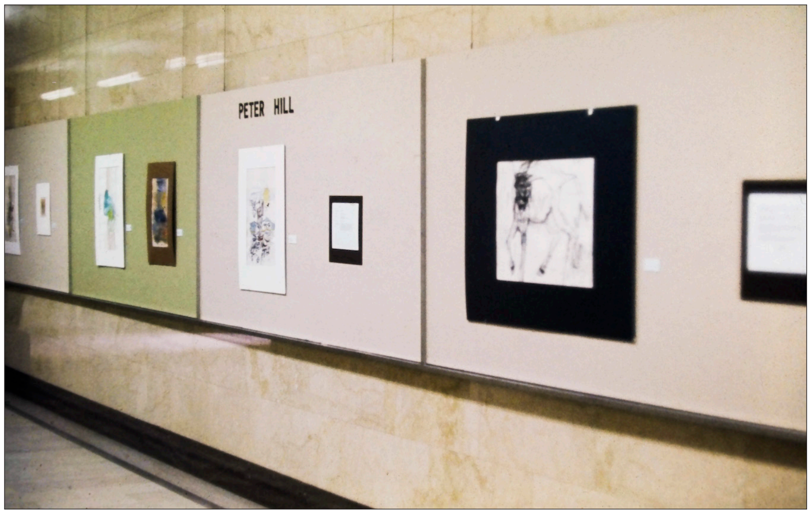
1961. Oil on canvas.



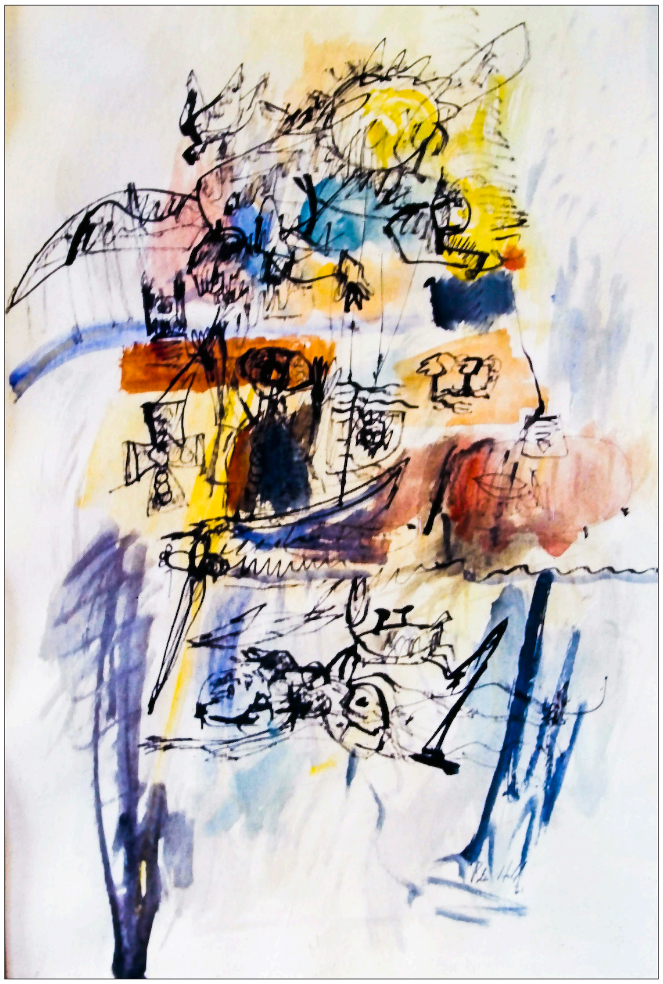
1961. Oil on canvas.



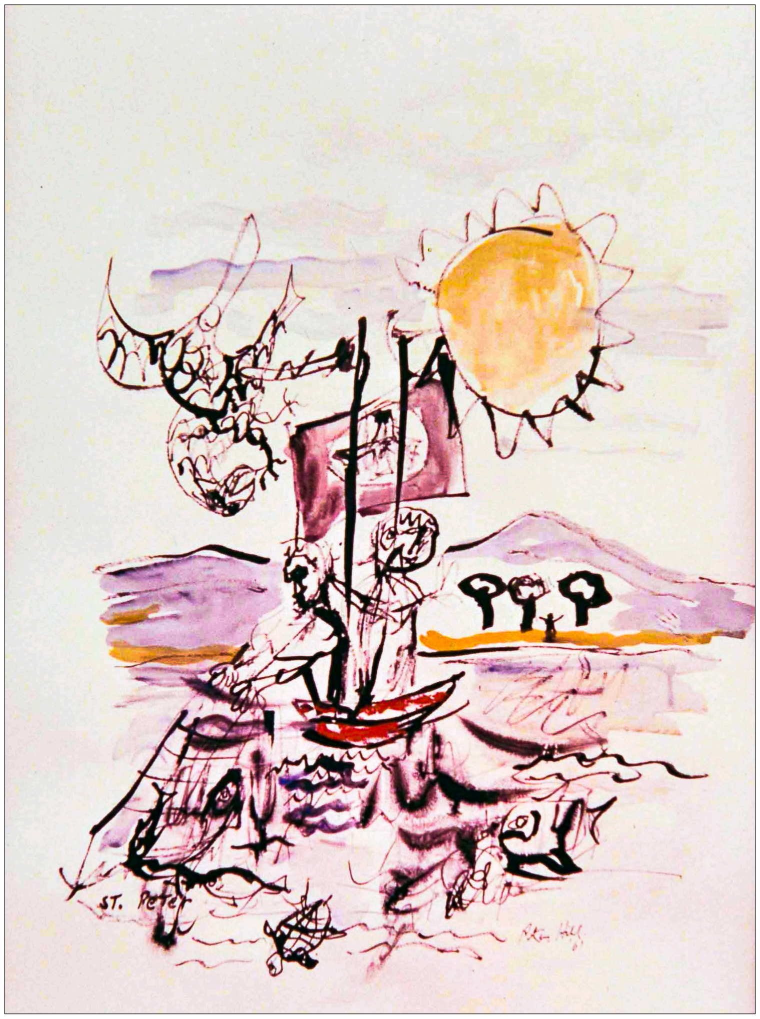
Belial, 1961. Ink, watercolor, and charcoal.



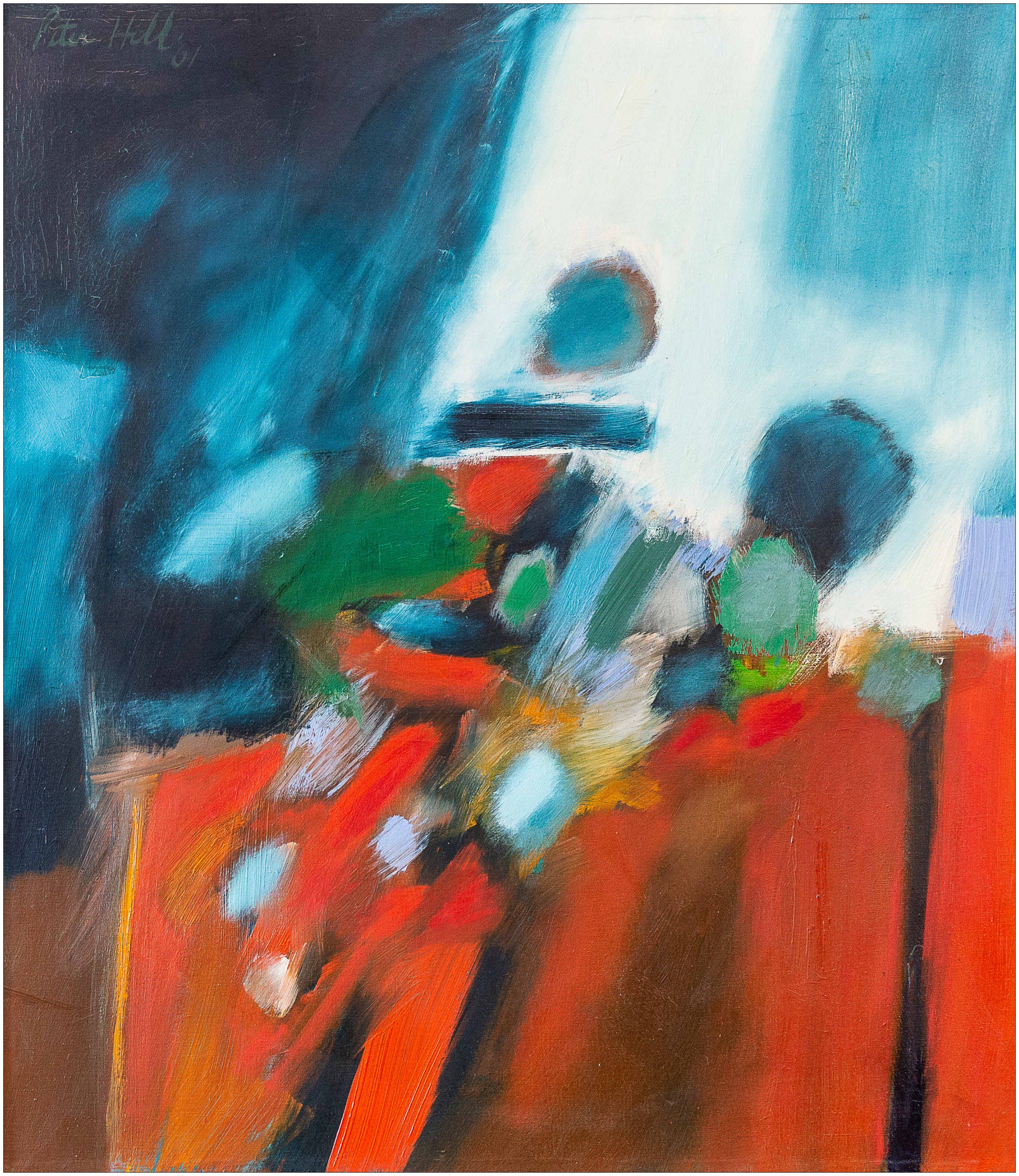
1962, works in ink and watercolor.



Legend of Arthur, 1961. Ink and watercolor.
Collection of Robert Austin.

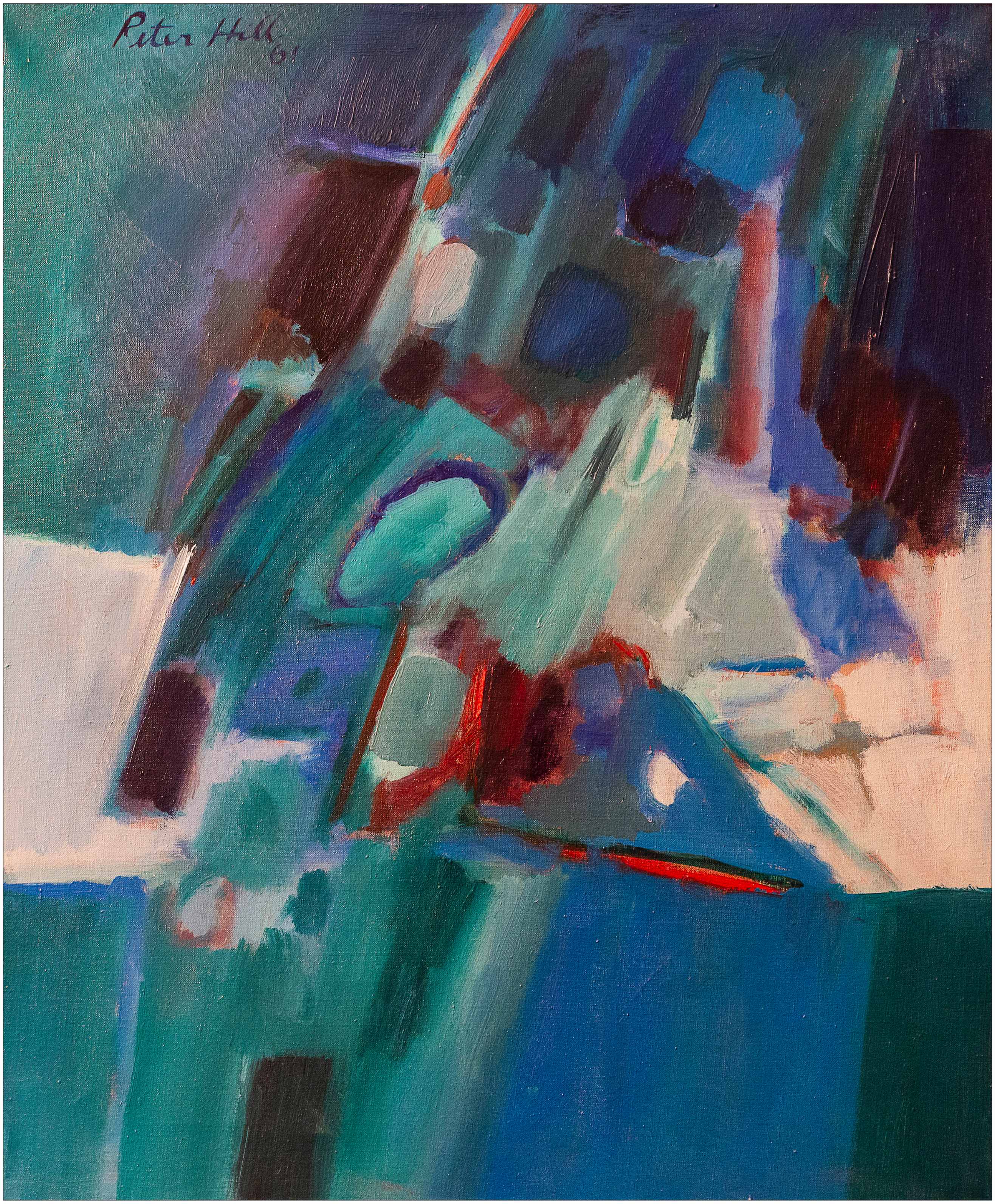

ST. Peter
Peter Hill

St. Peter, 1961. Ink and watercolor, 28.5 x 22.5 in.


Peter Hill 61

Belial

1961. Oil on canvas.
Collection of Beverly Young.



Interior Study

1961. Oil on canvas, 24 x 20 in.
Collection of Antoinette Turnquist.

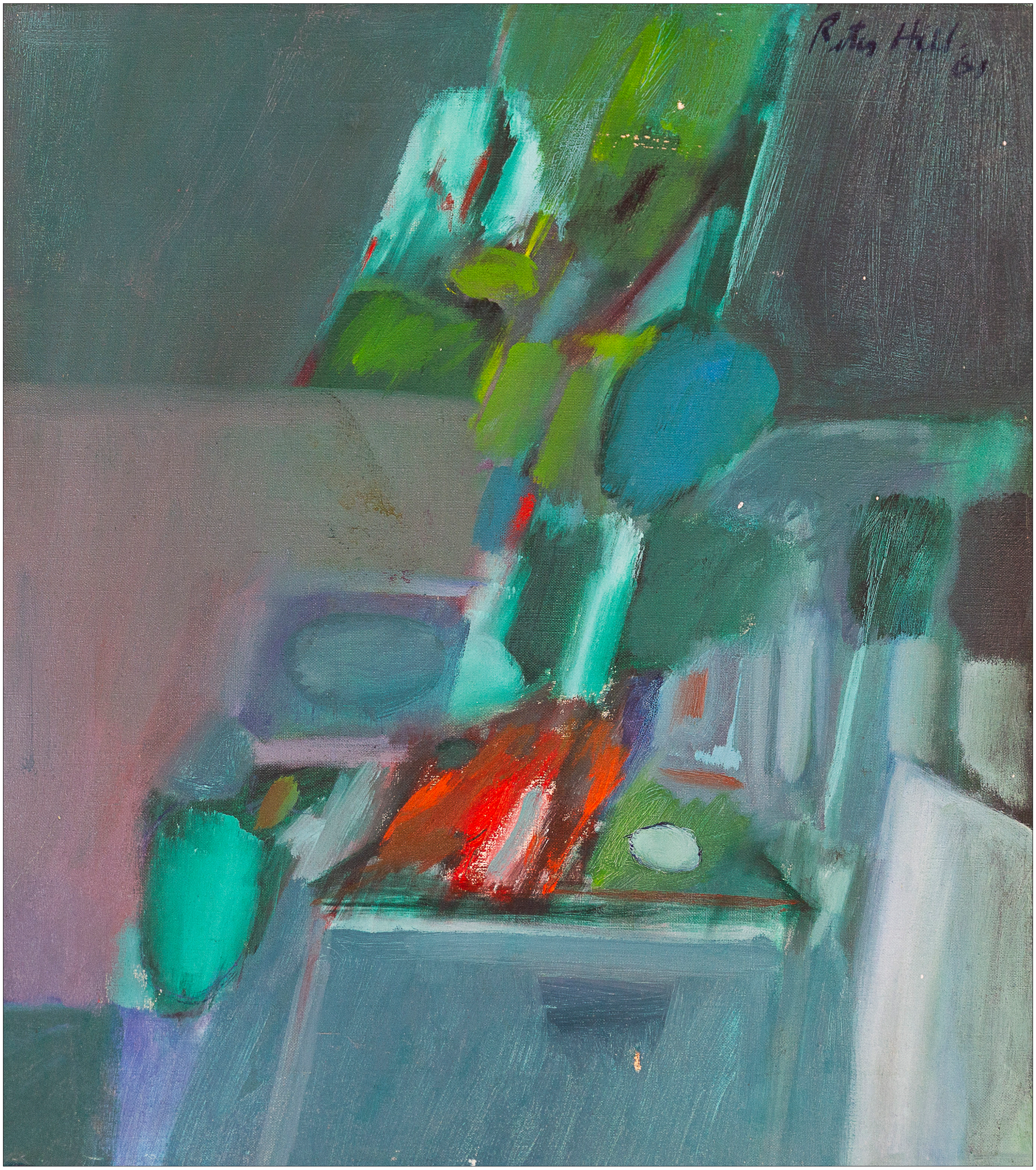


Table Study

1961. Oil on canvas, 18 x 16 in.
Collection of Judy Church Blazek.

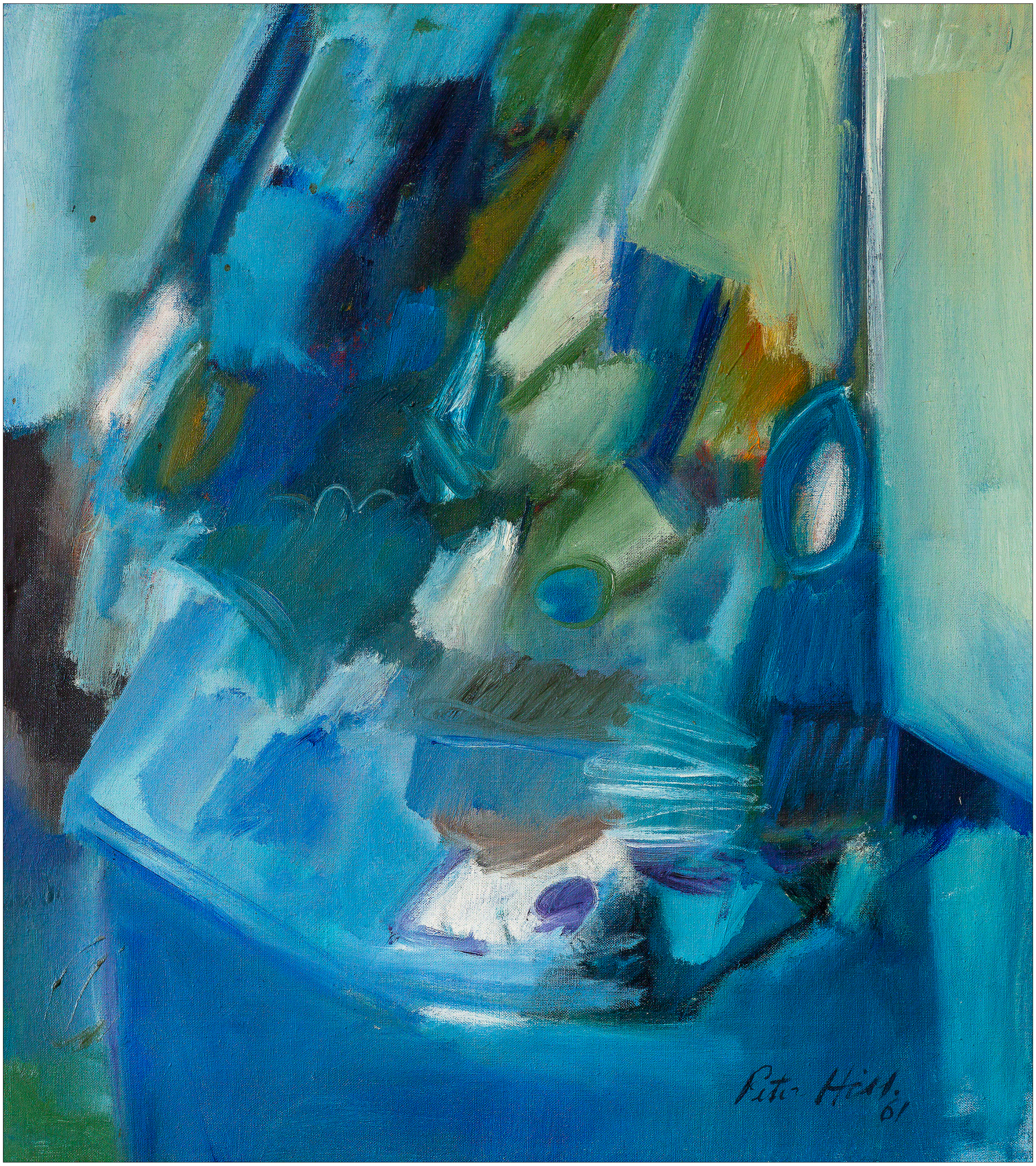
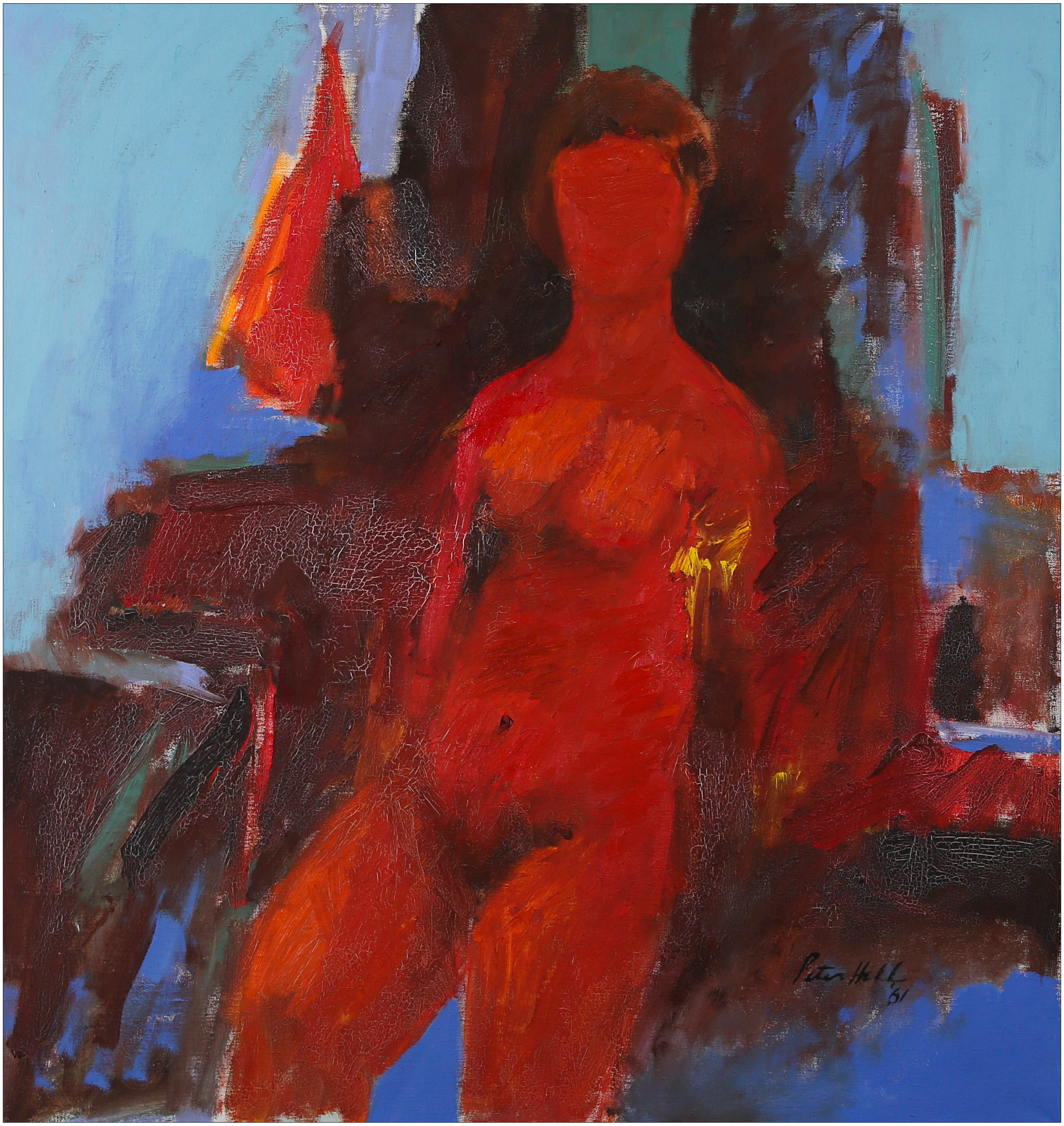


Table Study

1961. Oil on canvas, 19.5 x 17.5 in.
Collection of Kristin and Greg Janisch.

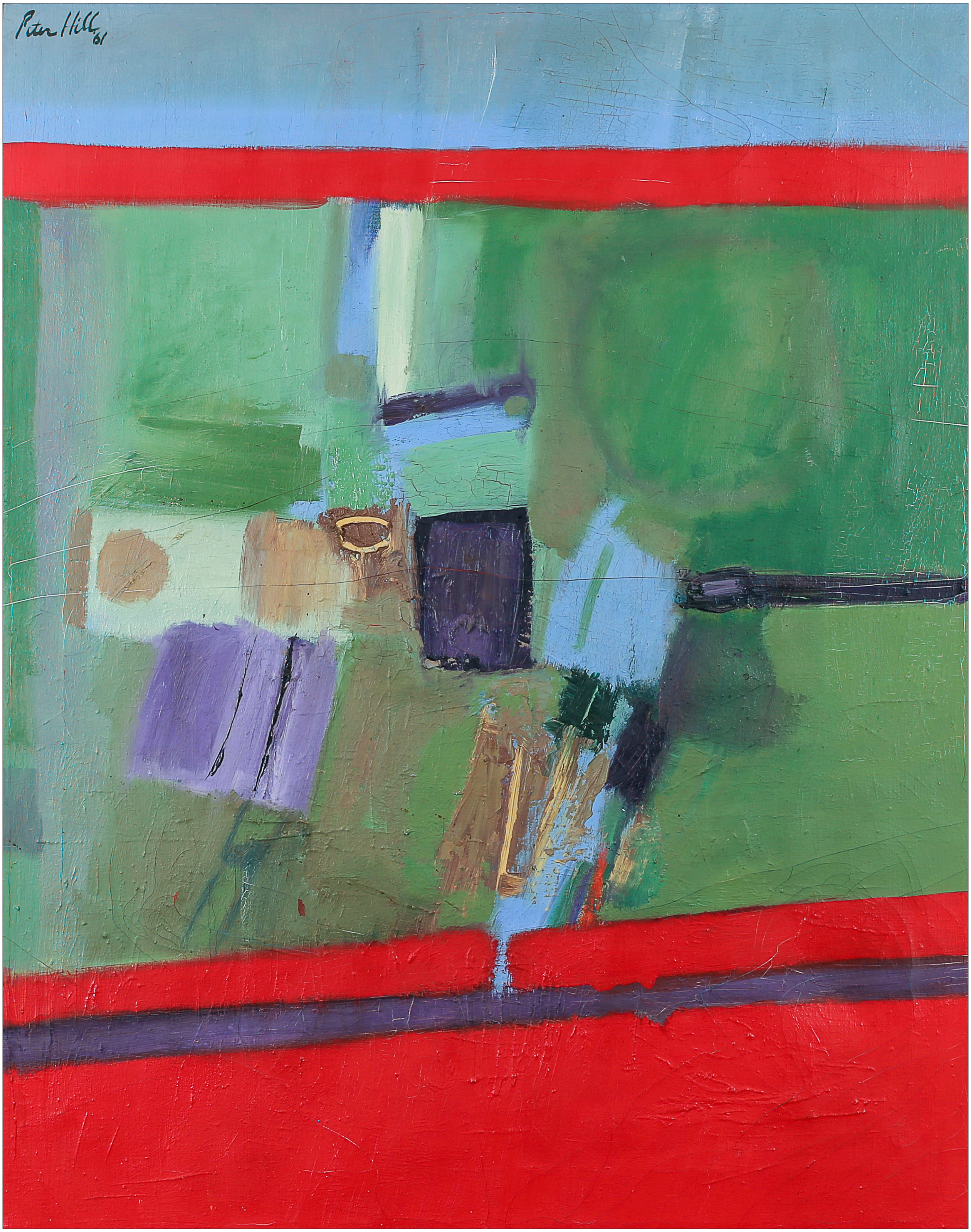


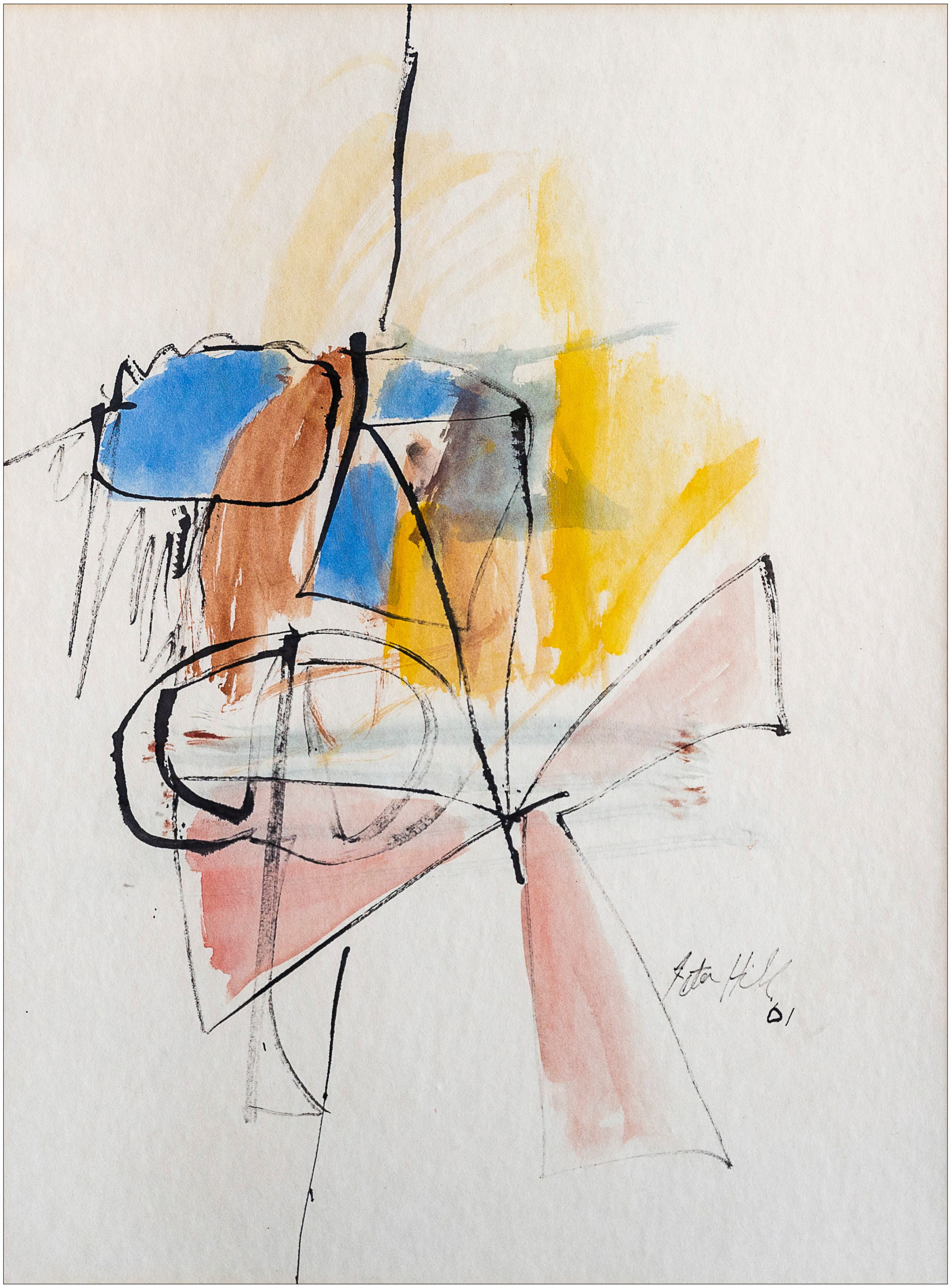
Seated Nude (above)

1961. Oil on canvas, 38.75 x 36.75 in.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.

Landscape (opposite)

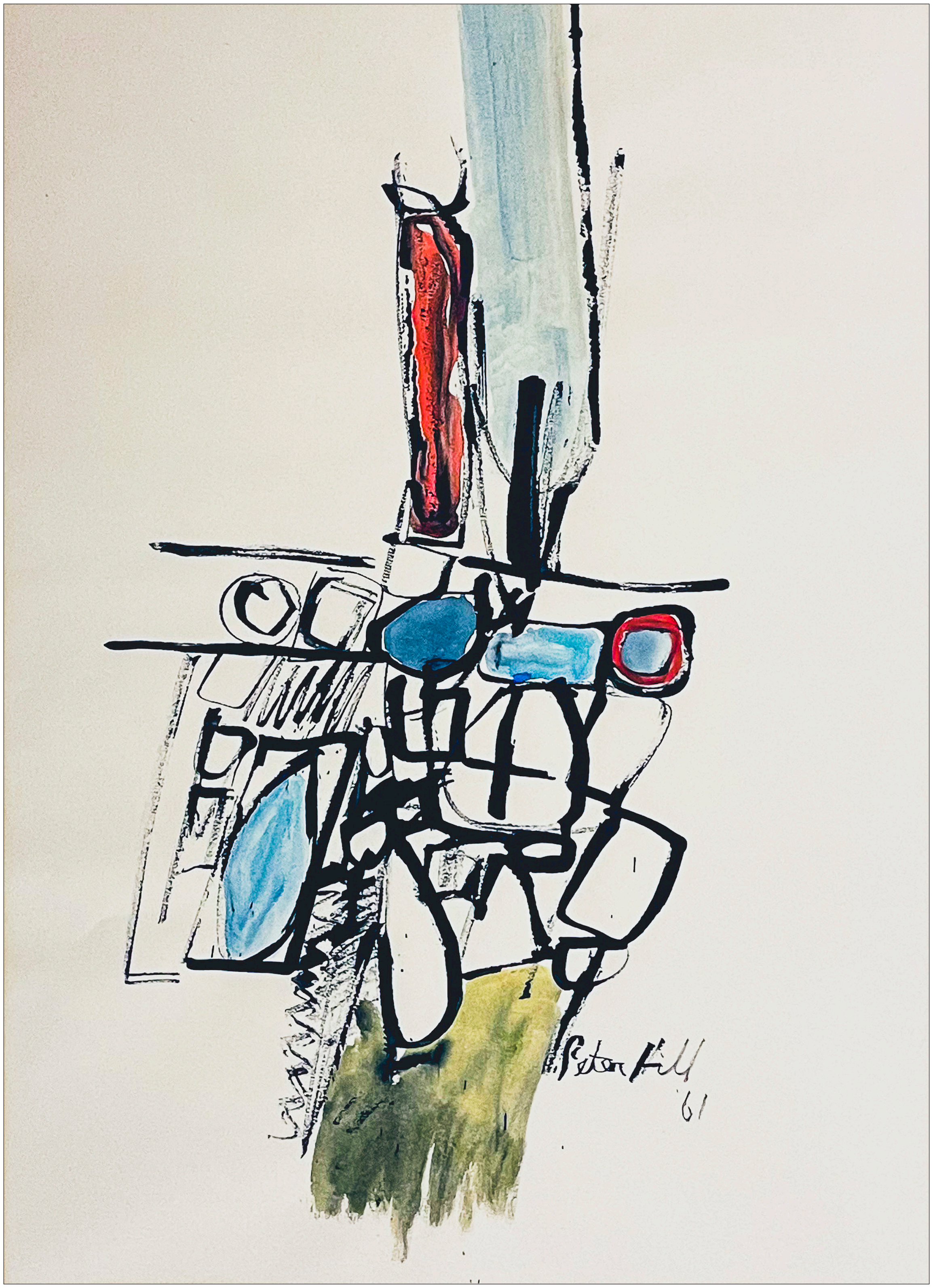
1961. Oil on canvas, 48 x 40 in.
Collection of Robert Hill and Tana Siebert.


Peter Hill 61



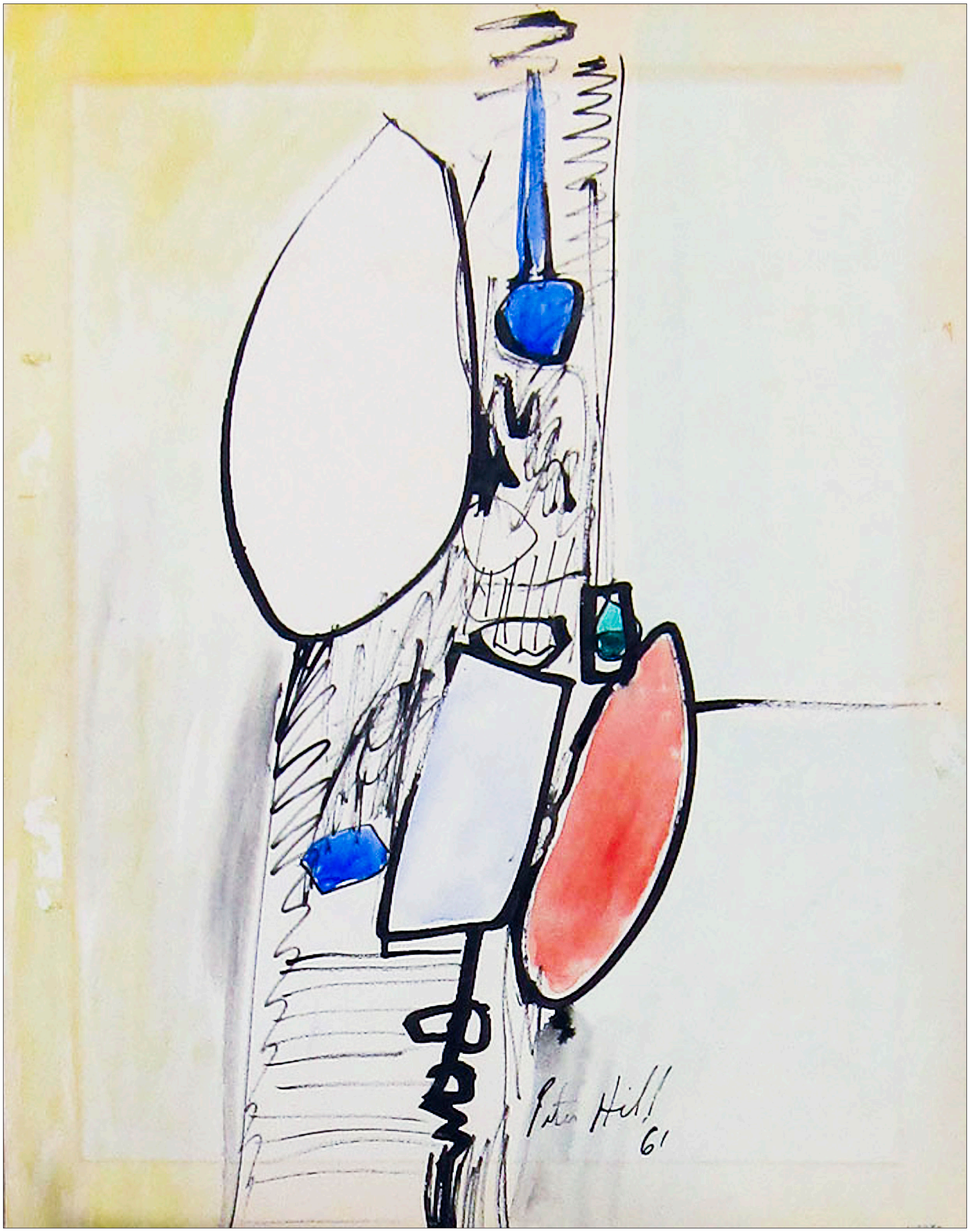
Untitled

1961. Ink and watercolor on paper, 29.5 x 23 in.
Collection of Kristin and Greg Janisch.



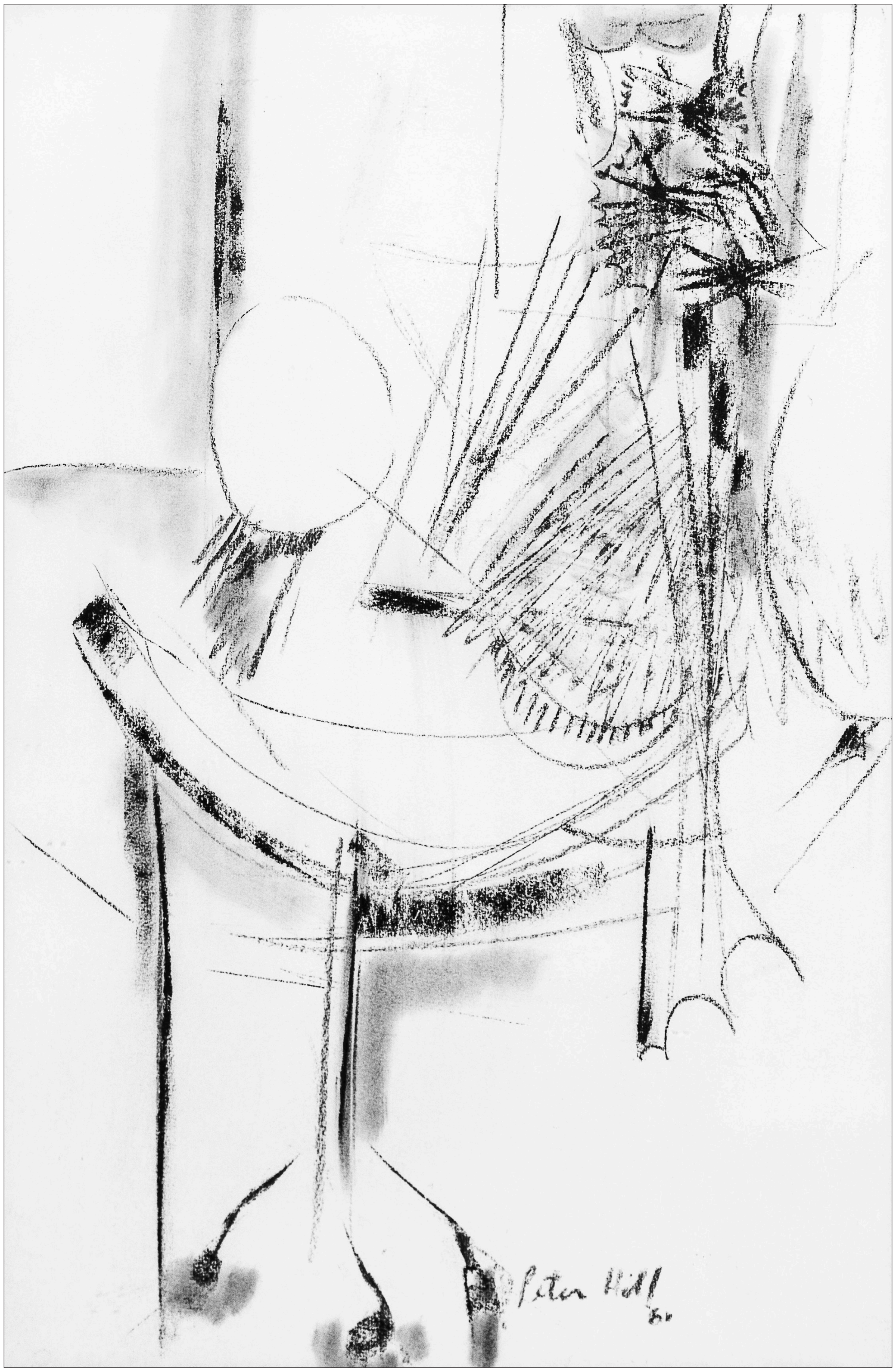
Composition

1961. Ink and gouache on paper.
Collection of the Joslyn Museum of Art.



Untitled

1961. Ink and watercolor on paper, 17.5 x 13.5 in.
Collection of the Museum of Nebraska Art.



Period Piece

1960 or 1961. Charcoal on paper, 18 x 12 in.
Collection of Judy Church Blazek.

Joslyn Museum of Art • January 14 to February 11, 1962

from the announcement to
Peter Hill's 1962 show at the Joslyn Museum

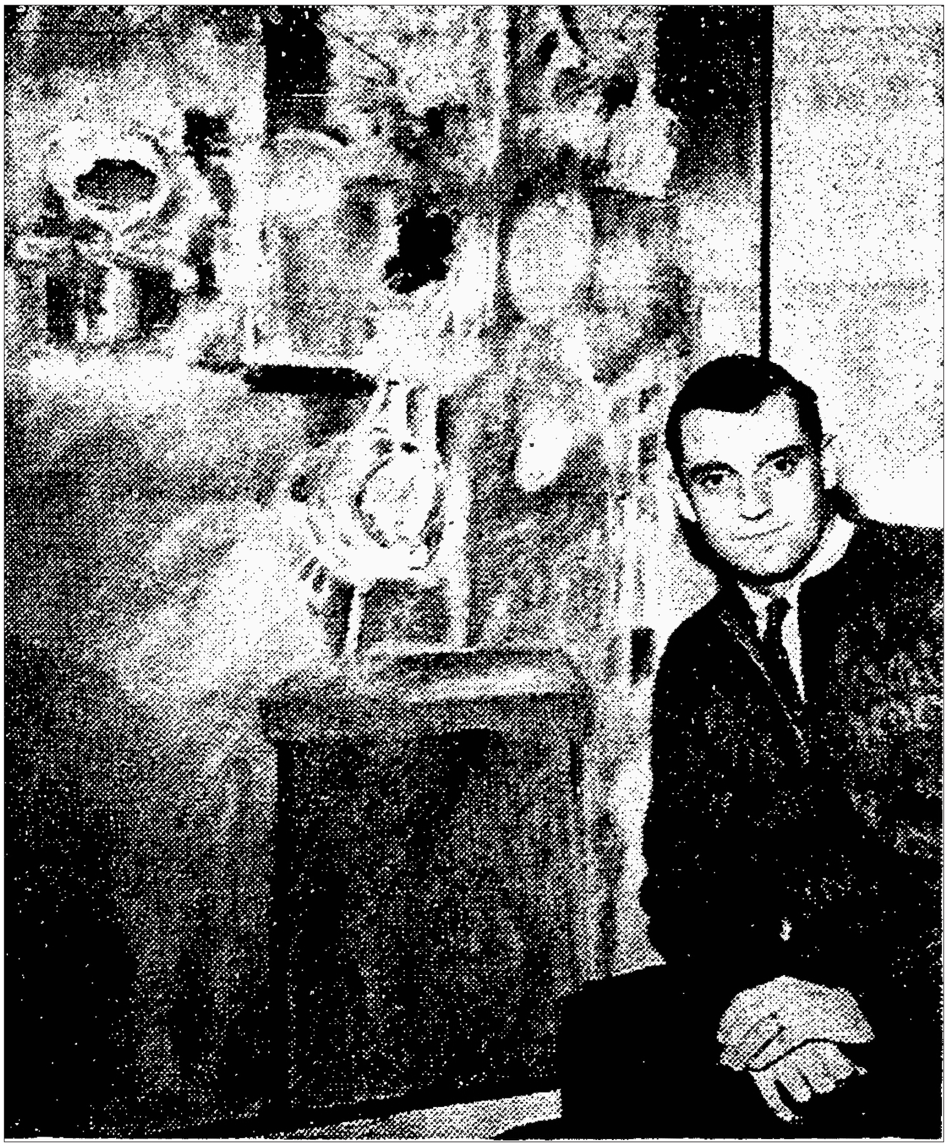
The abstract expressionism of Mr. Hill's previous work has, in his first one-man show in Omaha, evolved into a personal statement which reflects the most advanced esthetic thinking today.

In contrast to the "Action" painters who feel that the act of painting is more important than the painting itself, Mr. Hill clearly places the emphasis on the production of action; the painting.

In contrast to a philosophy which correlates all esthetic qualities with the formal elements of the craft, Mr. Hill has evolved a synthesis of evocative subject and sensitive abstract form in which the esthetic content arises out of this synthesis of previously felt antagonistic elements.

Within this evolution are produced paintings which are distinctively original, contribute positively to the total development of Twentieth Century painting, and will be recognized as the product of Omaha's most outstanding artist.

J. V. Blackwell
Head of Art Department
Omaha University



Hill . . . next to his painting "Nude in Interior."

Omaha World-Herald,
February 3, 1962

On Finding the 'Nude' in a Piece of Art

An Omaha university art instructor is conducting a one-man art show at Joslyn Museum in Omaha. One of his exhibits is a painting, "Nude in Interior." The *World-Herald* printed a picture of "Nude" and it reminded us of the painting a small boy once did in class. It was a picture of a tree and a rabbit and a hunter, the little boy said.

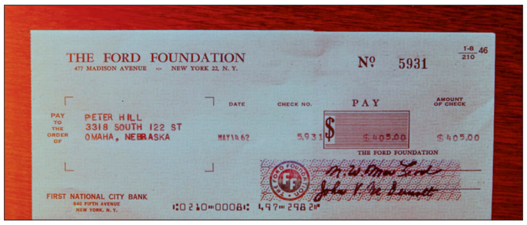
His teacher looked at the picture, puzzled. "I can see the rabbit and the tree but where's the hunter, Johnny?"

"Oh," the little boy explained, "he's hiding behind the tree."

After looking at Instructor Peter Hill's picture carefully, we conclude that the "Nude" must have been shyly hiding behind those daubs of paint on the canvas.

Growing Recognition: 1962 and 1963

Following his one-man show at the Joslyn, my father did what any good artist and teacher does: he kept at his craft. He also began to get noticed more broadly. In May 1962, *The Damned*—a painting exhibited at the Mid-America Art Show in Kansas City—received a Ford Foundation Purchase Award (page 119). My father was so proud of that fact that he expended a photograph making a slide of the check.



THE FORD FOUNDATION
477 MADISON AVENUE · NEW YORK 22, N. Y.

Nº 5931

1-8/210 46

PAY TO THE ORDER OF
PETER HILL
3318 SOUTH 122 ST
OMAHA, NEBRASKA

DATE	CHECK NO.	PAY	AMOUNT OF CHECK
MAY14 62	5931	$ $405.00	$405.00

THE FORD FOUNDATION

FIRST NATIONAL CITY BANK
640 FIFTH AVENUE
NEW YORK, N. Y.

⑆0210⑉0008⑆ 497⑉2982⑈

Ford Foundation check for *The Damned*.

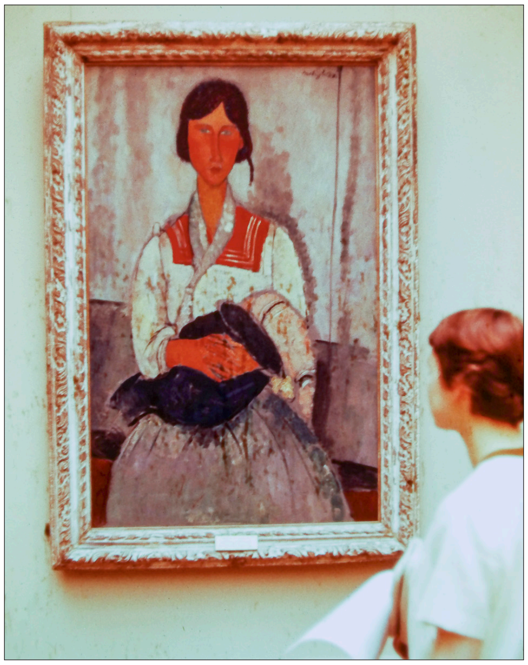
In exchange for the cash, he had to donate the painting to an institution of his choice. He picked Albion College, where it lives to this day. He would later gift to Albion another painting: *Green Interior No. 2* (page 124).

In late 1963, his painting *Persepolis* (page 99) received the top purchase prize at the Springfield (Missouri) Art Museum's annual regional exhibition. (He did not photograph that check.) And throughout 1963 he had another honor to prepare for: The first one-man show at the newly opened Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery in Lincoln, Nebraska. (Albion would lend *The Damned* to the Sheldon for that show.)

Bob Kutak kept buying art; the Joslyn kept making sales and rentals; and one of Dad's works, *Red Figures*, went to Washington, D.C., to hang in the offices of Nebraska senator Roman Hruska.

His family grew. On January 7, 1963, his son Stephen Campbell was born. This would be the last of the children for a while.

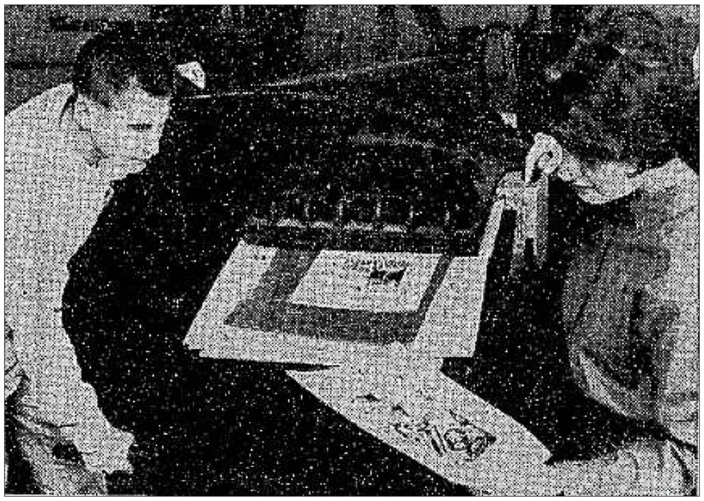
Some endeavors did not bear fruit, however. Case in point: the art showroom in the basement of his home. See the next page.



Jody Hill with Amedeo Modigliani's *Roma Woman with Baby* (1919); National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1963.

July 29, 1963, Jim Hill's third birthday: Jim, Steve, Jody, Pete, and Lindsey.

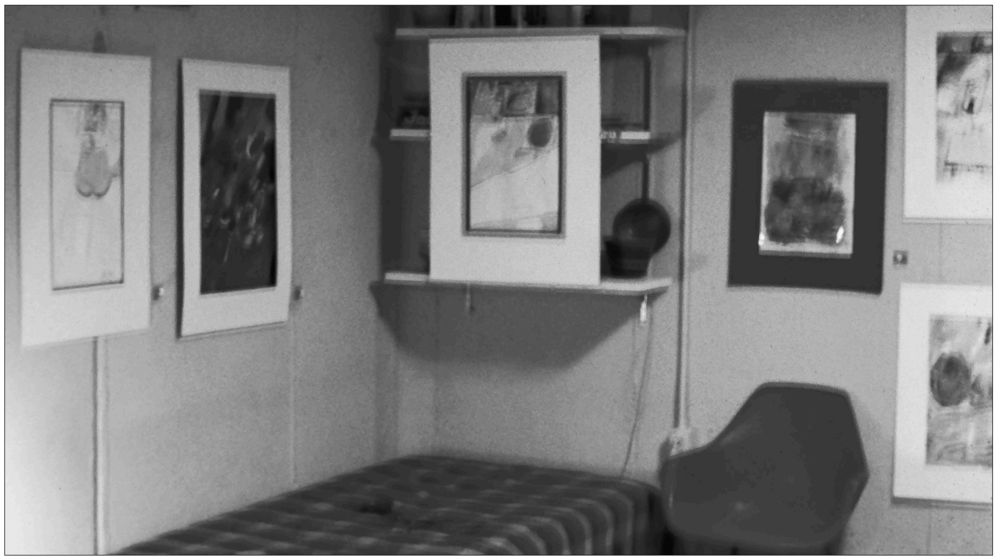
Images and captions below from *The Gateway*, April 13, 1962.

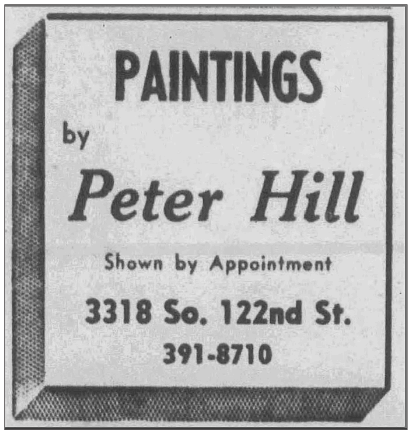


Judy Church looks at a print that Cliff Hallestelle has made on a relief press.

Sophomore Toni Turnquist puts finishing touches on her oil painting.

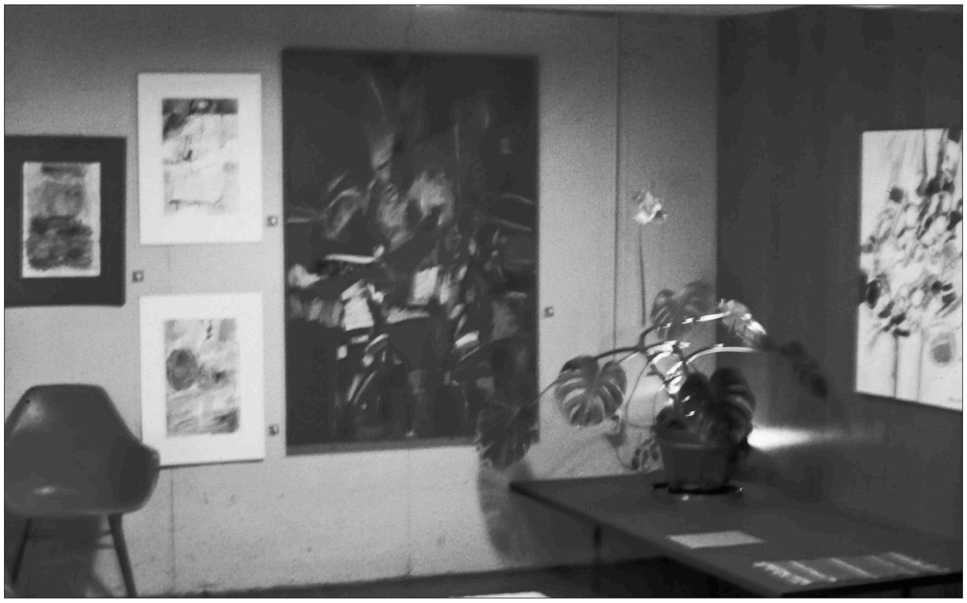
Artist's Showroom, 1961–2, at 3318 South 122nd Street (his home)

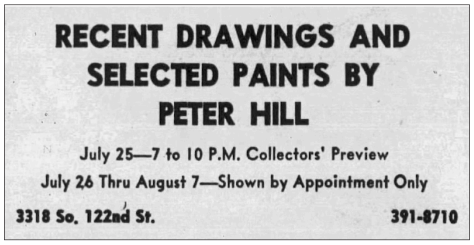




PAINTINGS
by
Peter Hill
Shown by Appointment
3318 So. 122nd St.
391-8710

Benson Sun, December 14, 1961

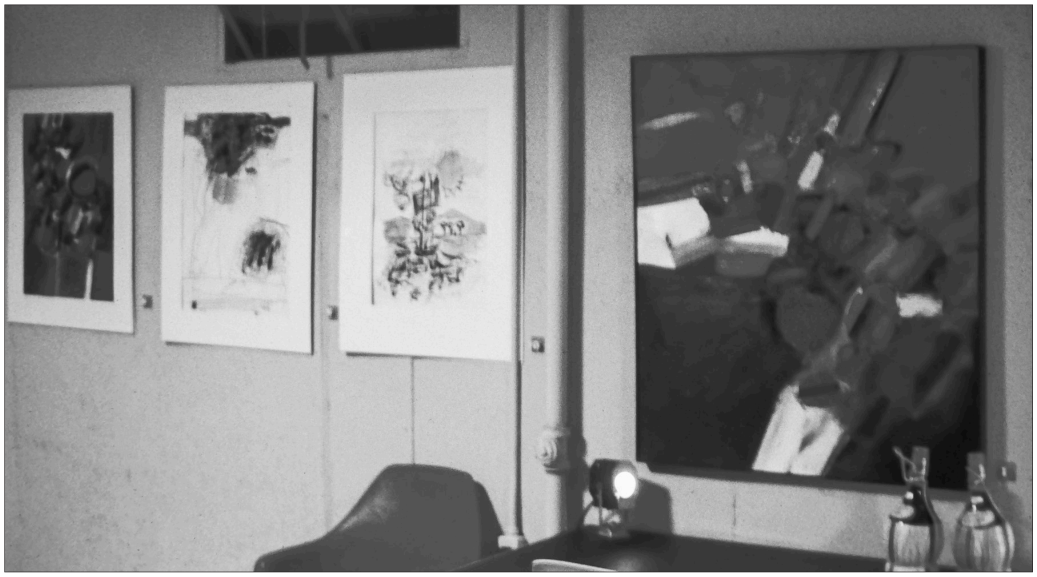




RECENT DRAWINGS AND
SELECTED PAINTS BY
PETER HILL
July 25—7 to 10 P.M. Collectors' Preview
July 26 Thru August 7—Shown by Appointment Only
3318 So. 122nd St. 391-8710

South Omaha Sun, July 19, 1962

Red Figures (middle), *Composition* (right)



St. Peter (middle)

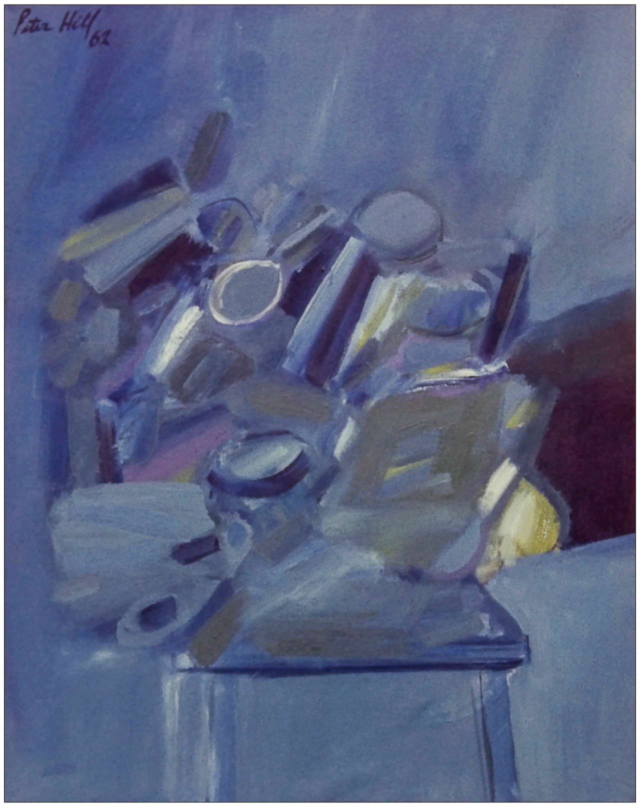
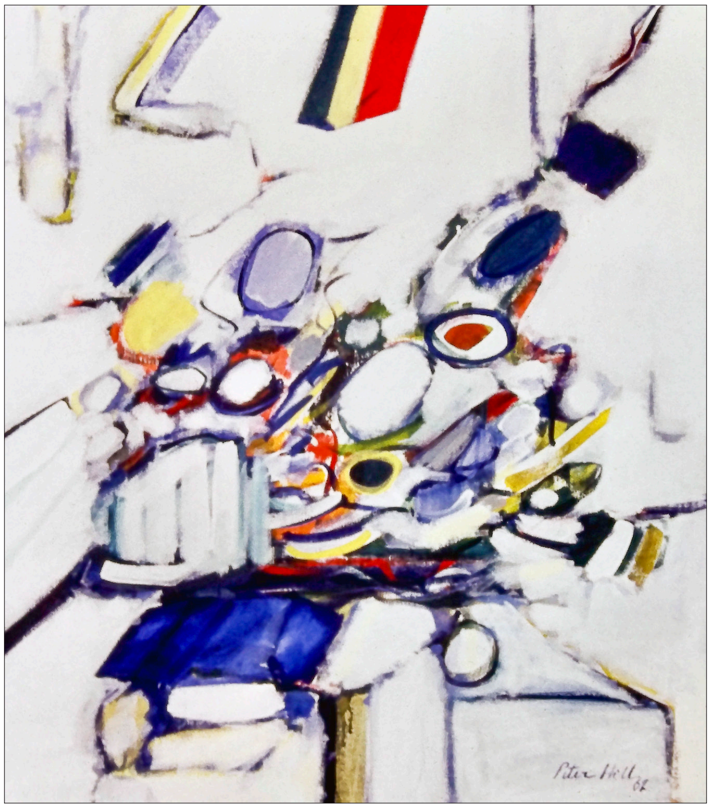
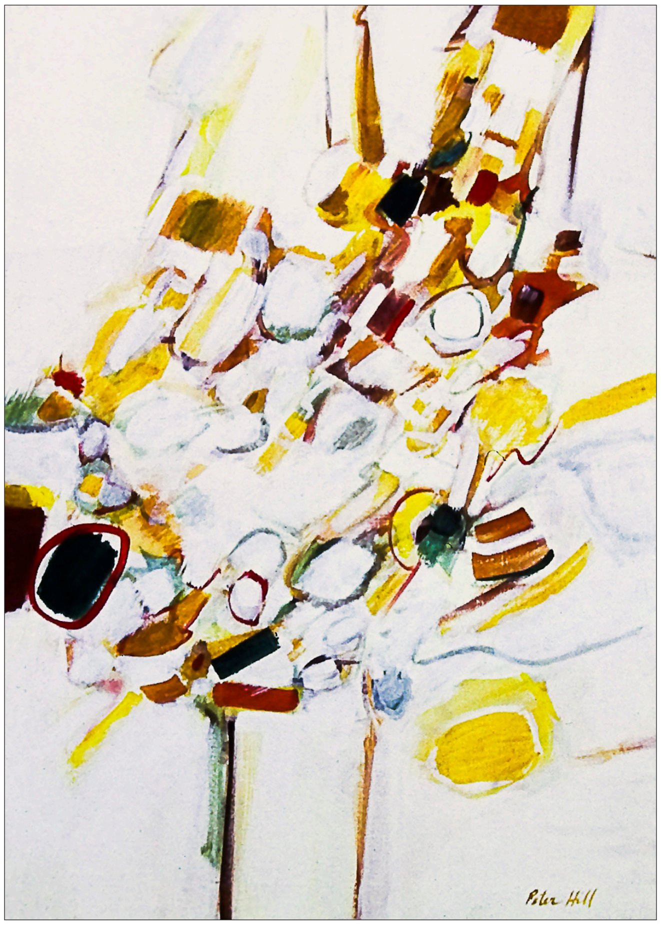


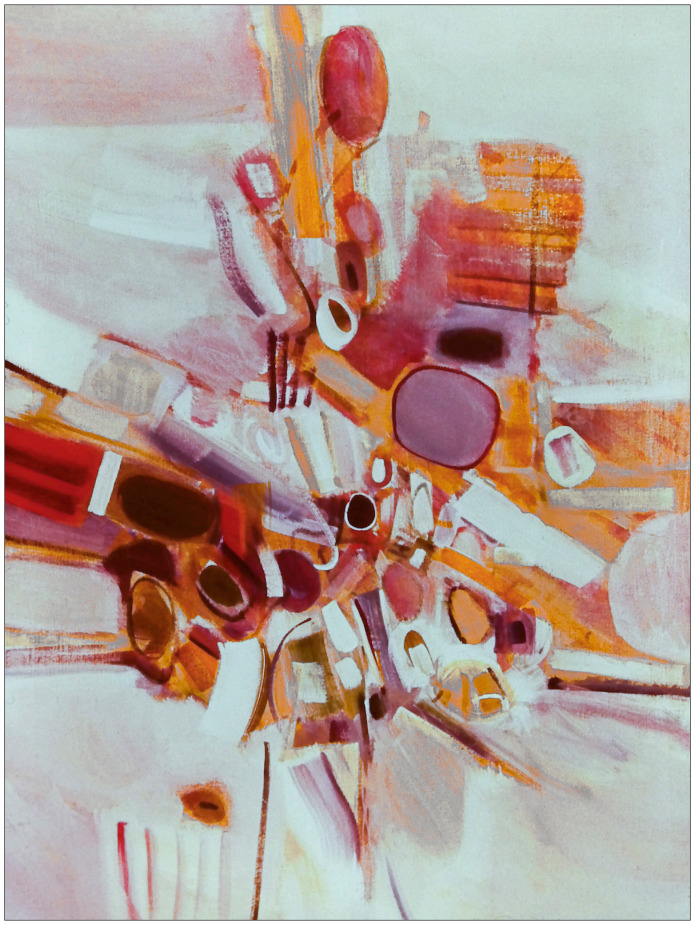
Table Study, 1962. Oil on canvas.



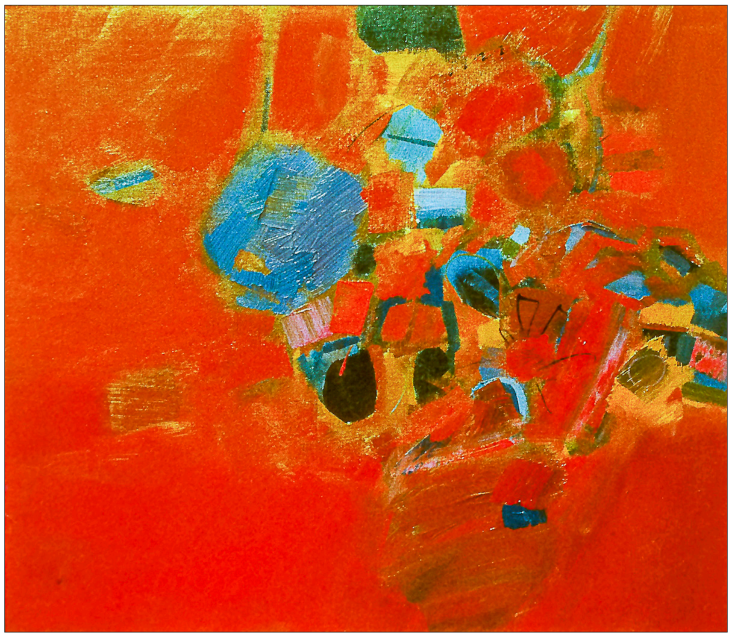
French Table, 1962. Acrylic on canvas.



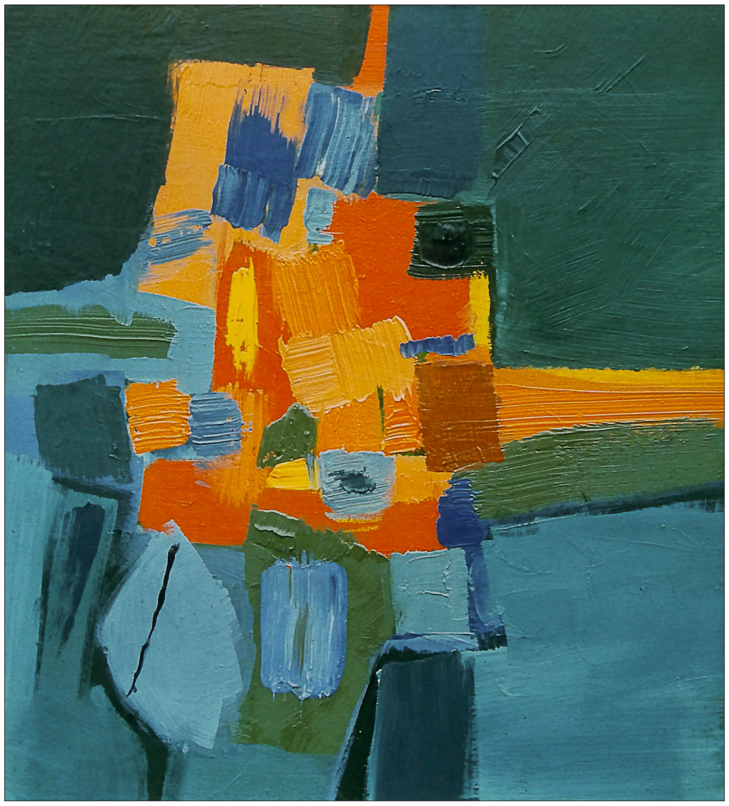
Composition, 1962. Acrylic on canvas.



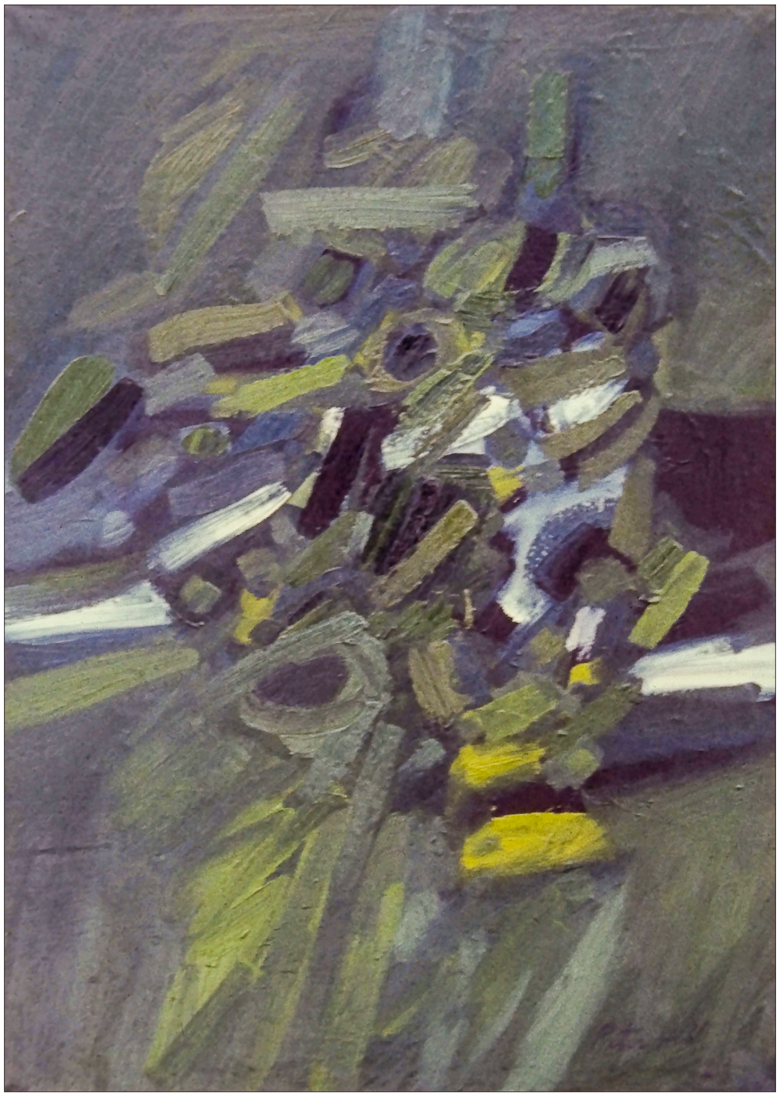
1962. Acrylic on canvas. 48 x 36 in.



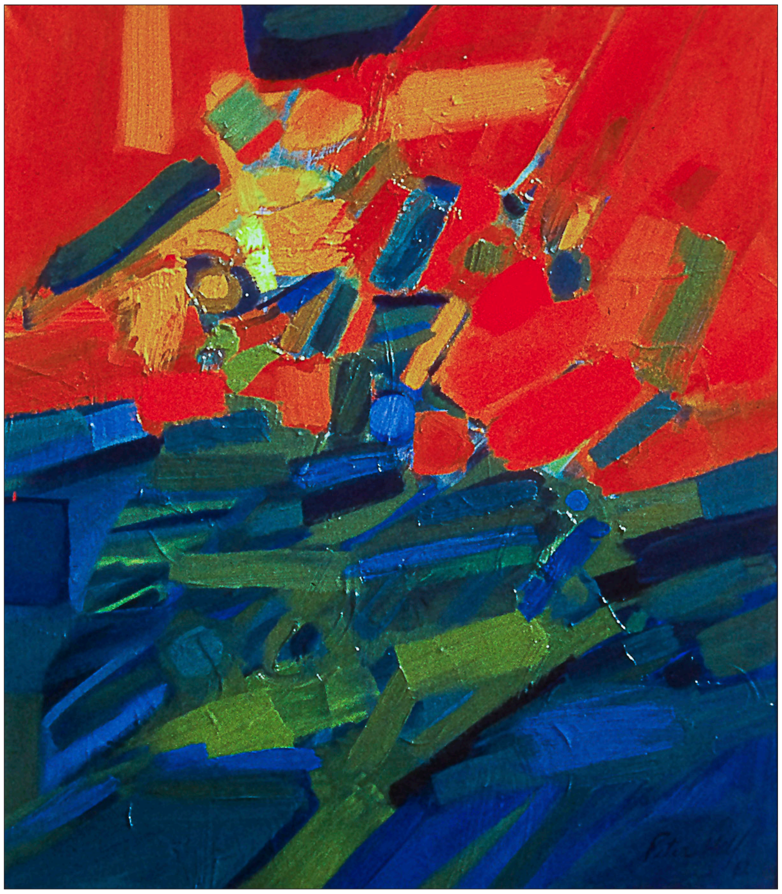
Flowers, 1962. Oil on canvas, 27 x 31 in.



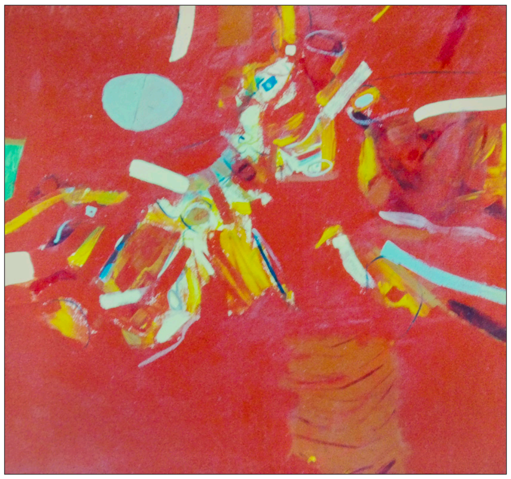
1962. Oil on canvas.



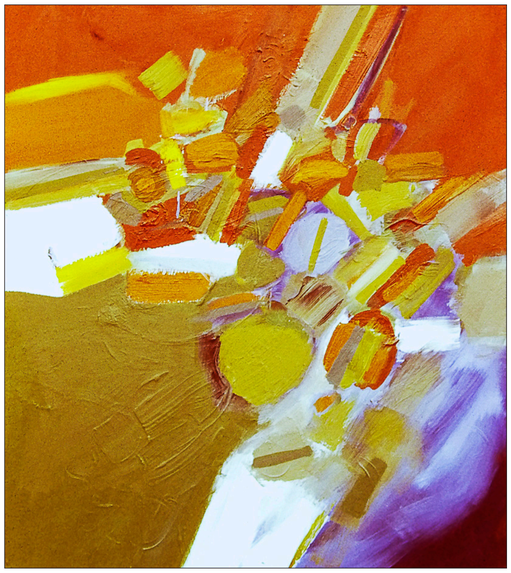
Composition, 1963. Oil on canvas.



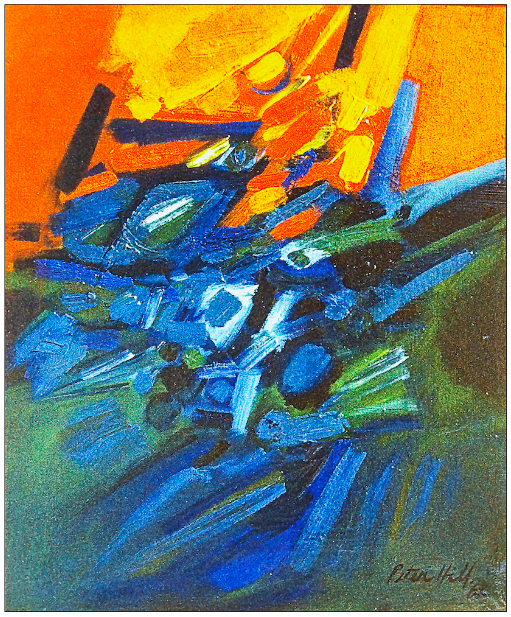
1962. Oil on canvas.



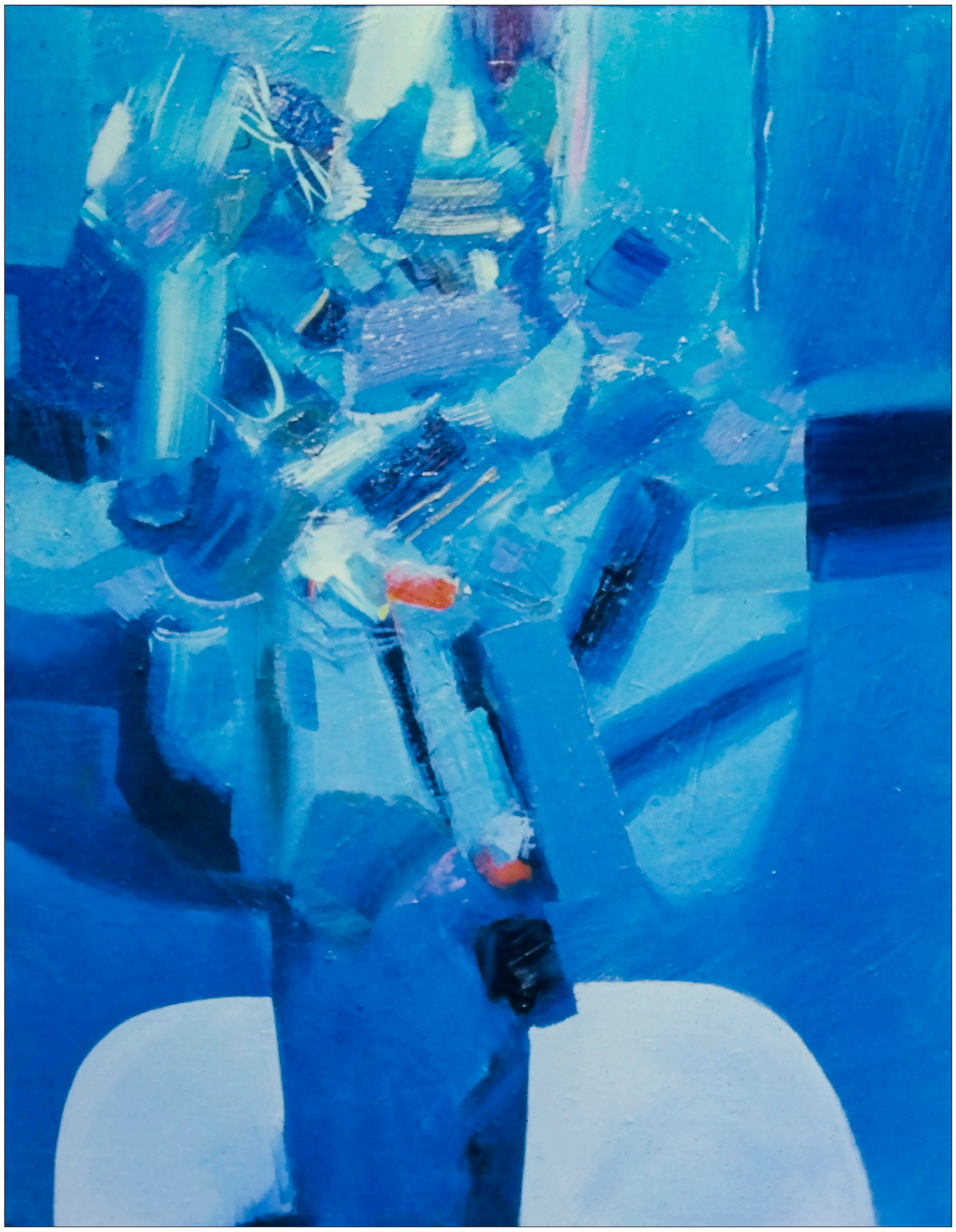
1963. Acrylic on canvas.



1962. Oil on canvas.

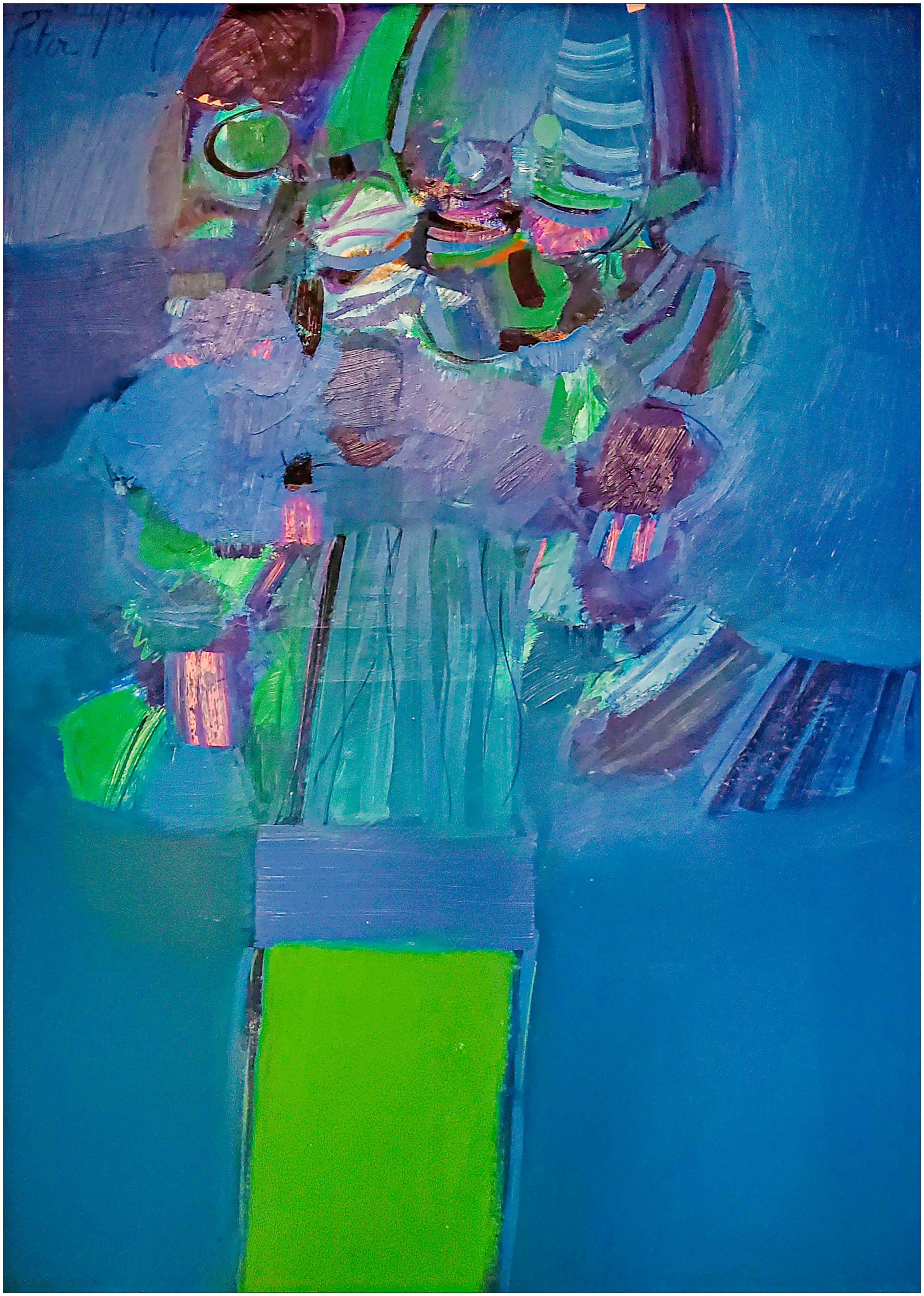


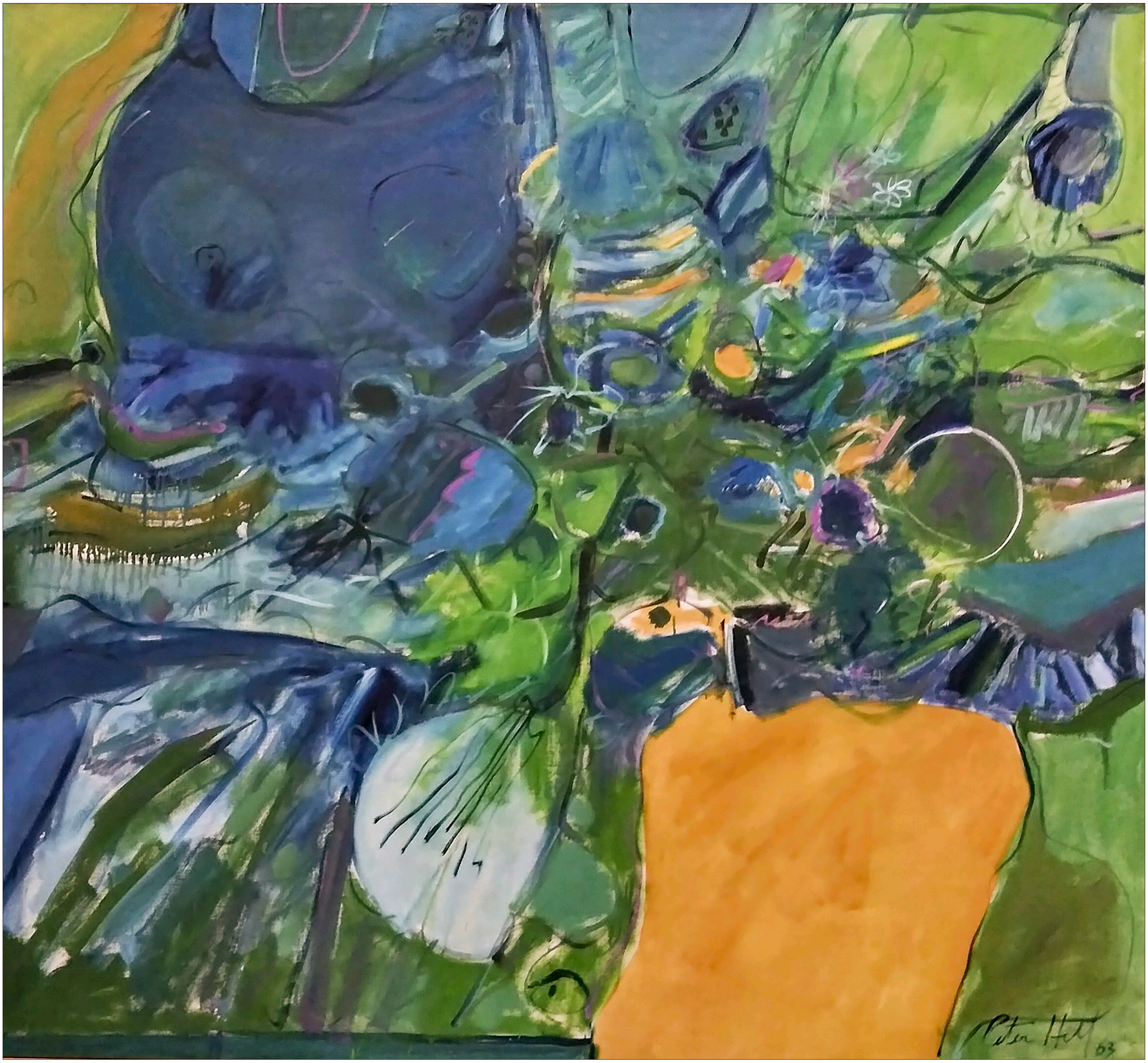
1962. Oil on canvas.



Flower Study, 1963–4. Oil on canvas.

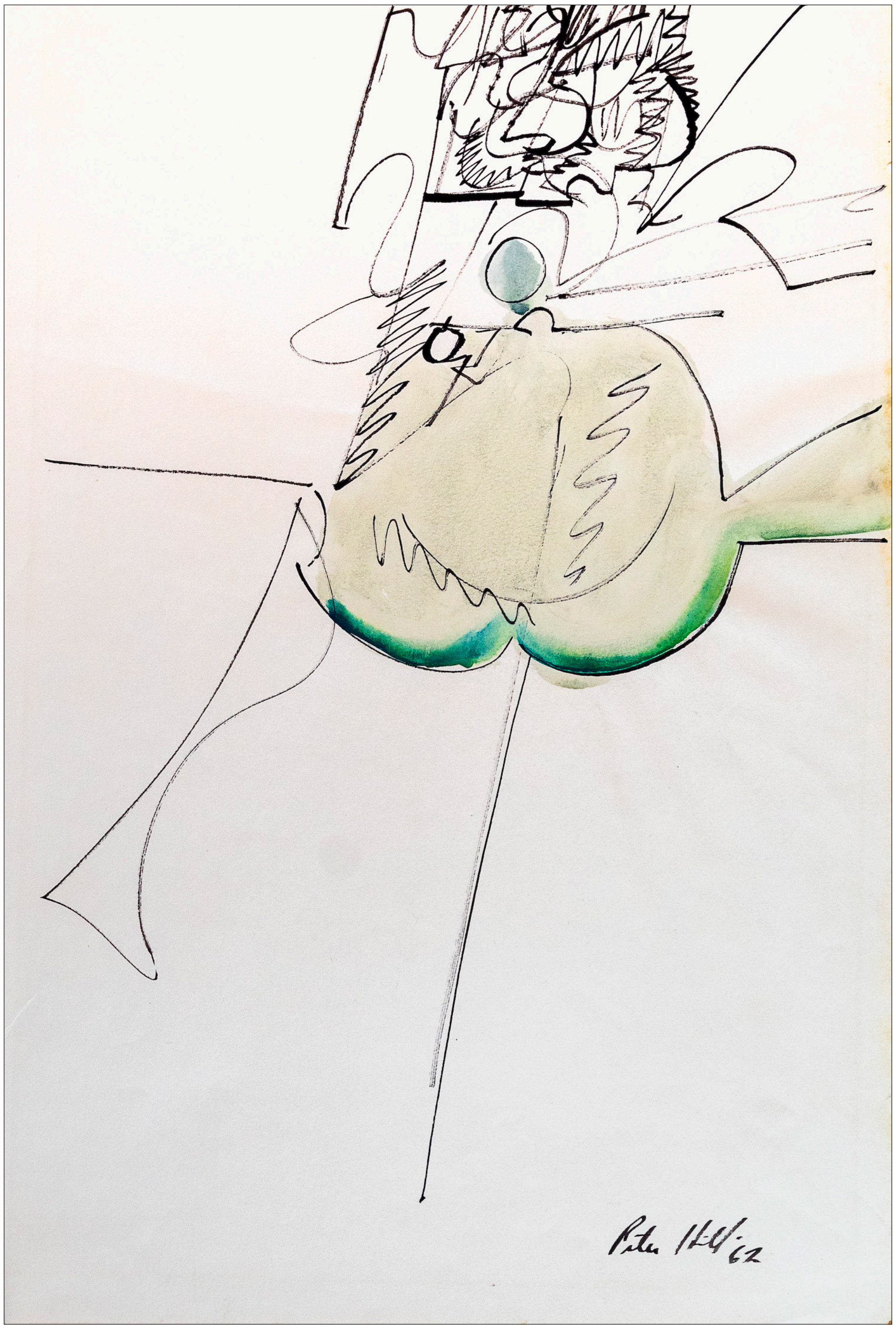
Page 98:
Flowers, 1963.
Oil on canvas.
Collection of Chuck and Kathy Campbell.





Persepolis

1963. Oil on canvas, 54 x 58 in.
Collection of the Springfield Art Museum, Missouri. Photograph courtesy of the museum.



Untitled, 1962. Ink and watercolor on paper, 17 x 13 in.

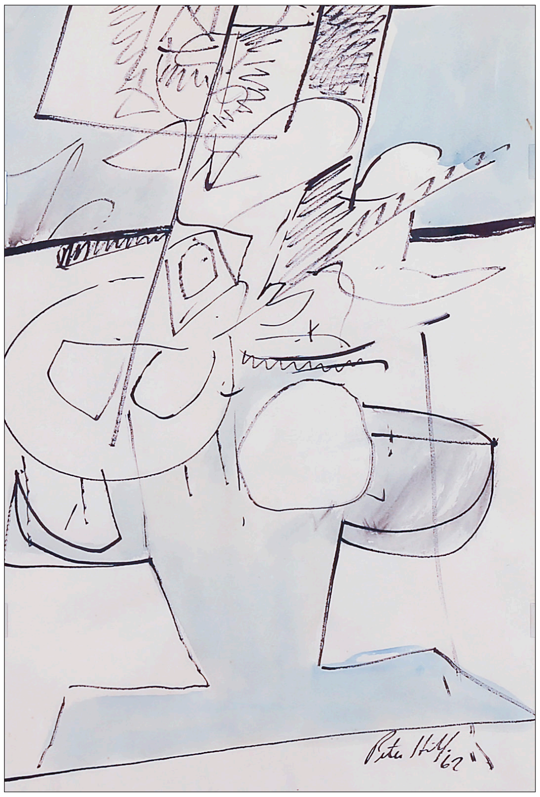
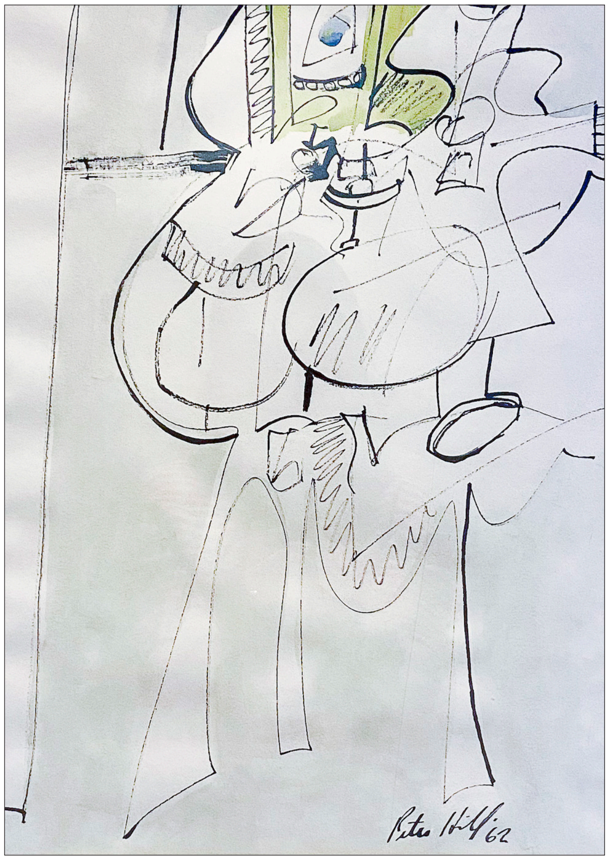
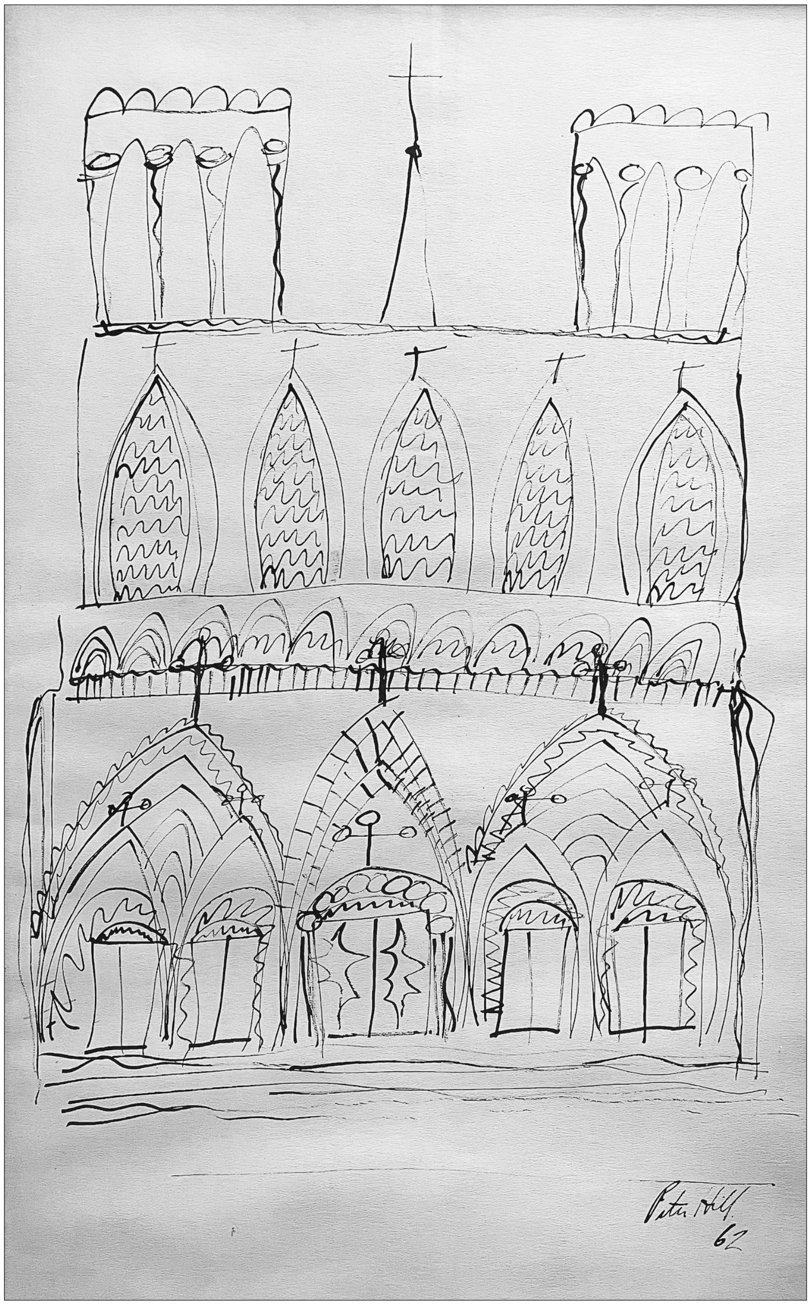


Table Study, 1962. Ink and watercolor on paper. Collection of Joan C. Hill.

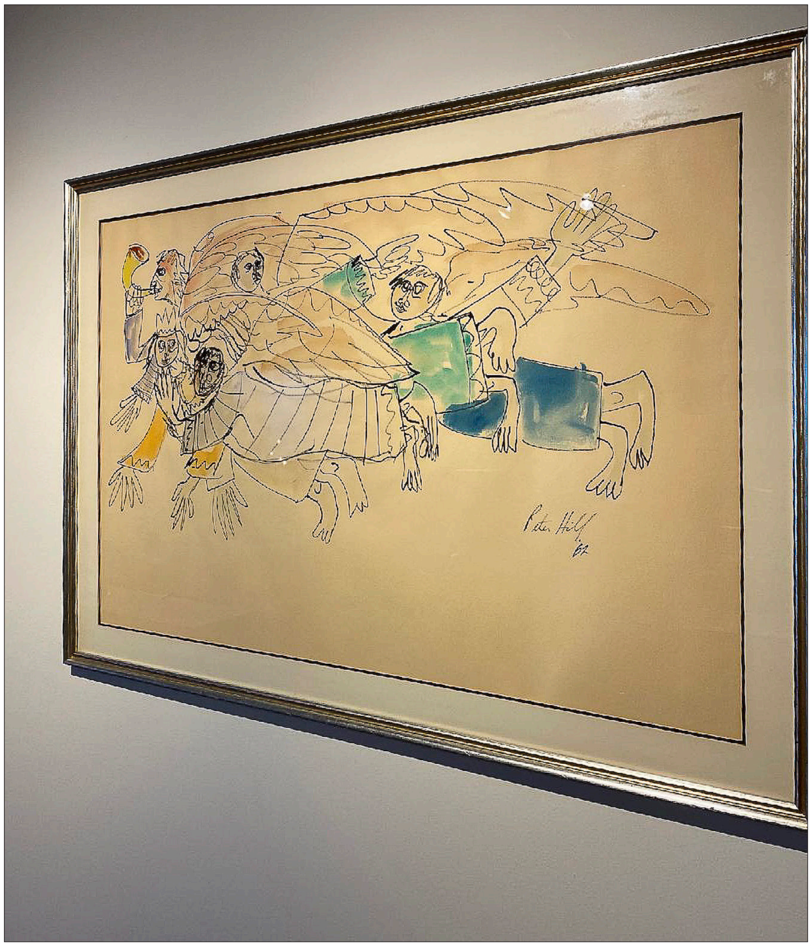


Untitled, 1962. Ink, ink wash, and watercolor, 26 x 21 in. Collection of Kutak Rock.



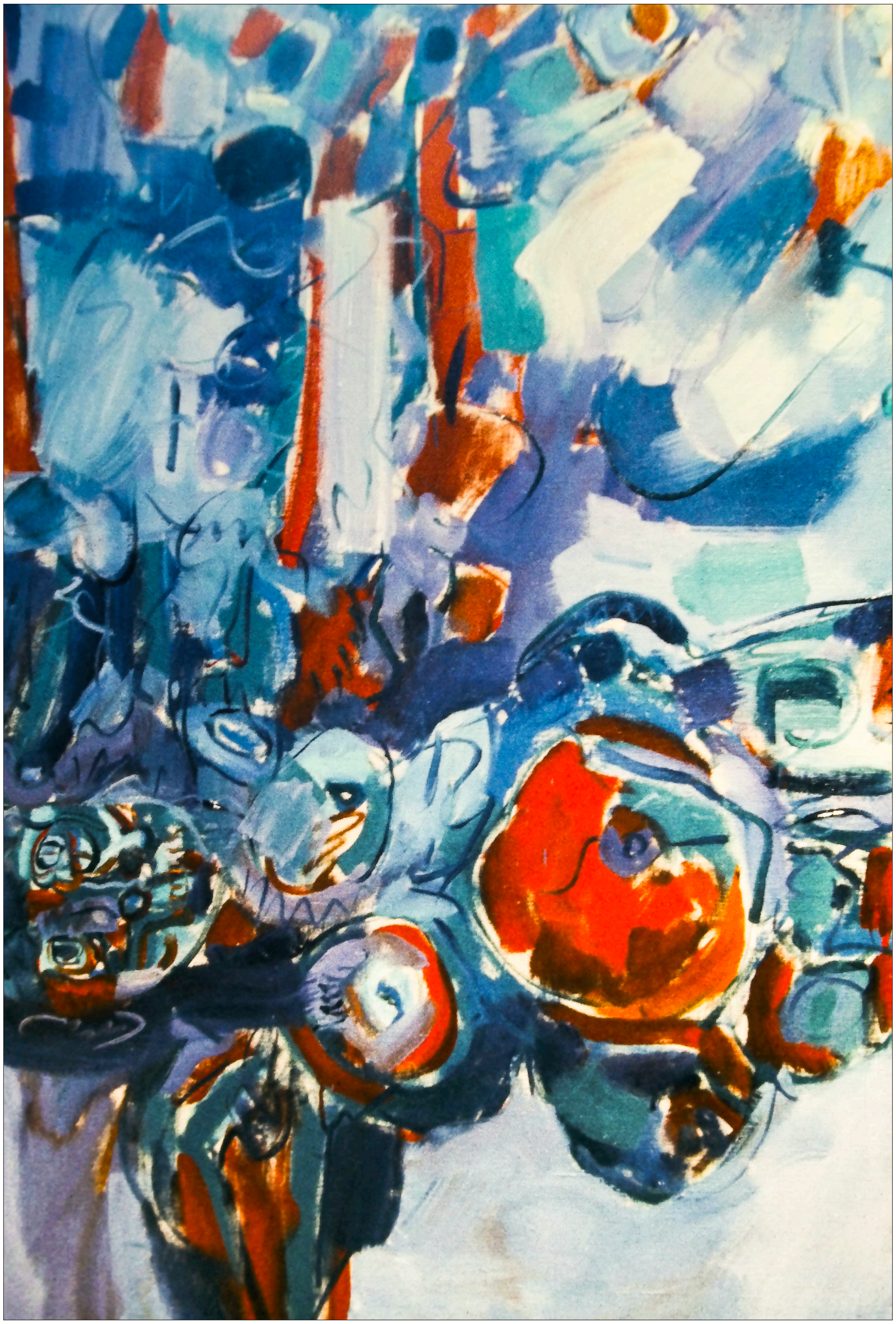
Peter Hill
62

Cathedral, 1962. Ink, 25.5 x 13.5 in.
Collection of Patrick Rock.



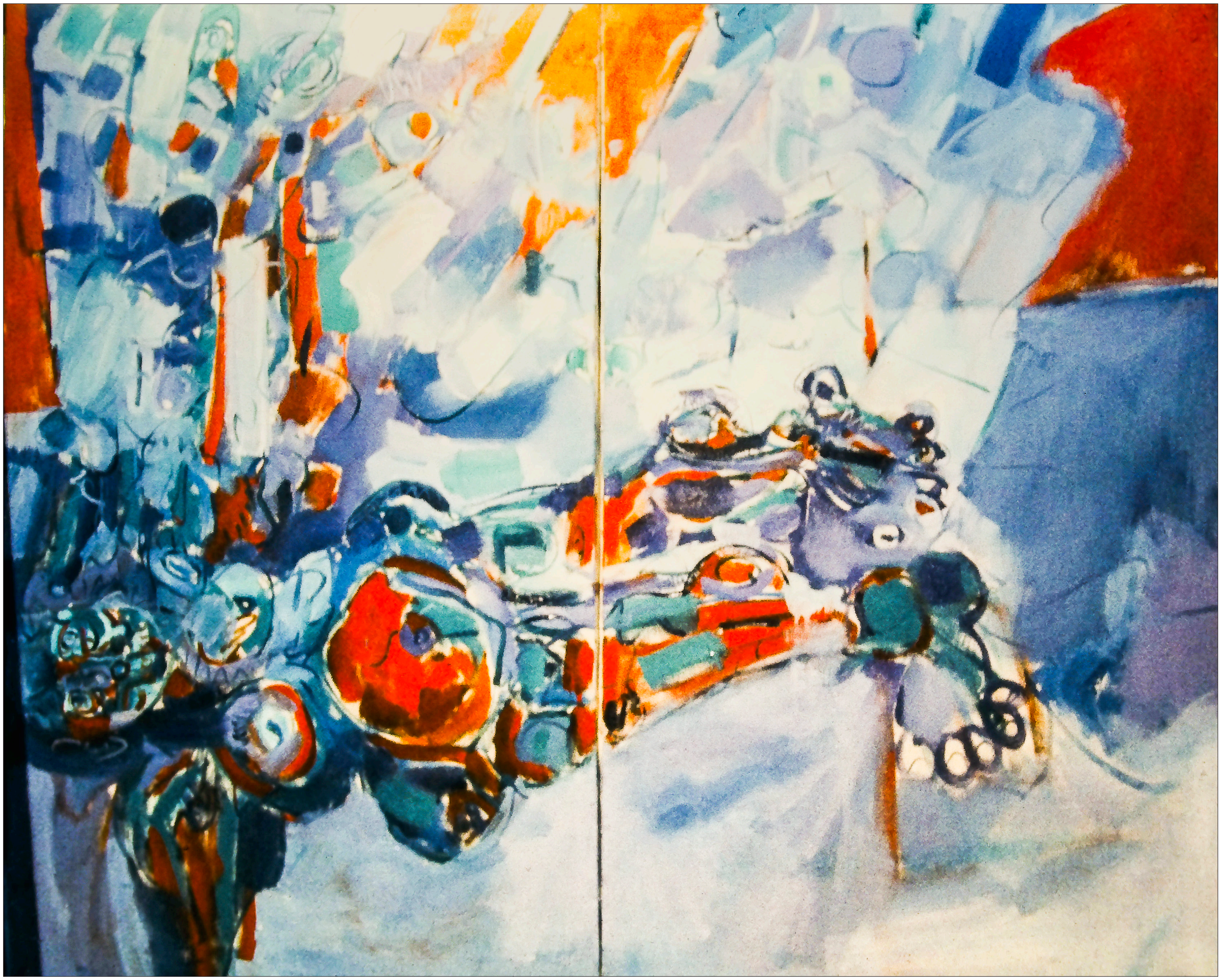
Peter Hill
62

Angels, 1962. Ink and watercolor.



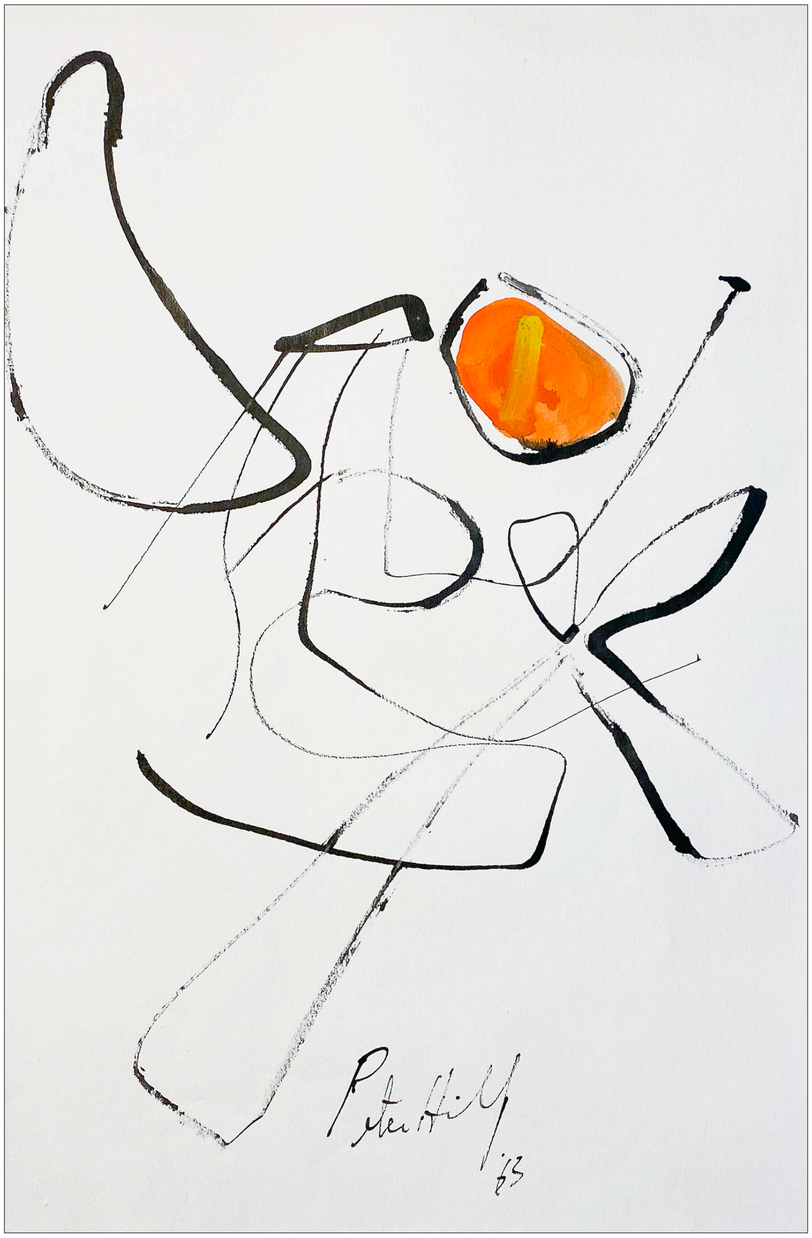
Study for *The Damned* (detail)

1962. Oil on canvas.

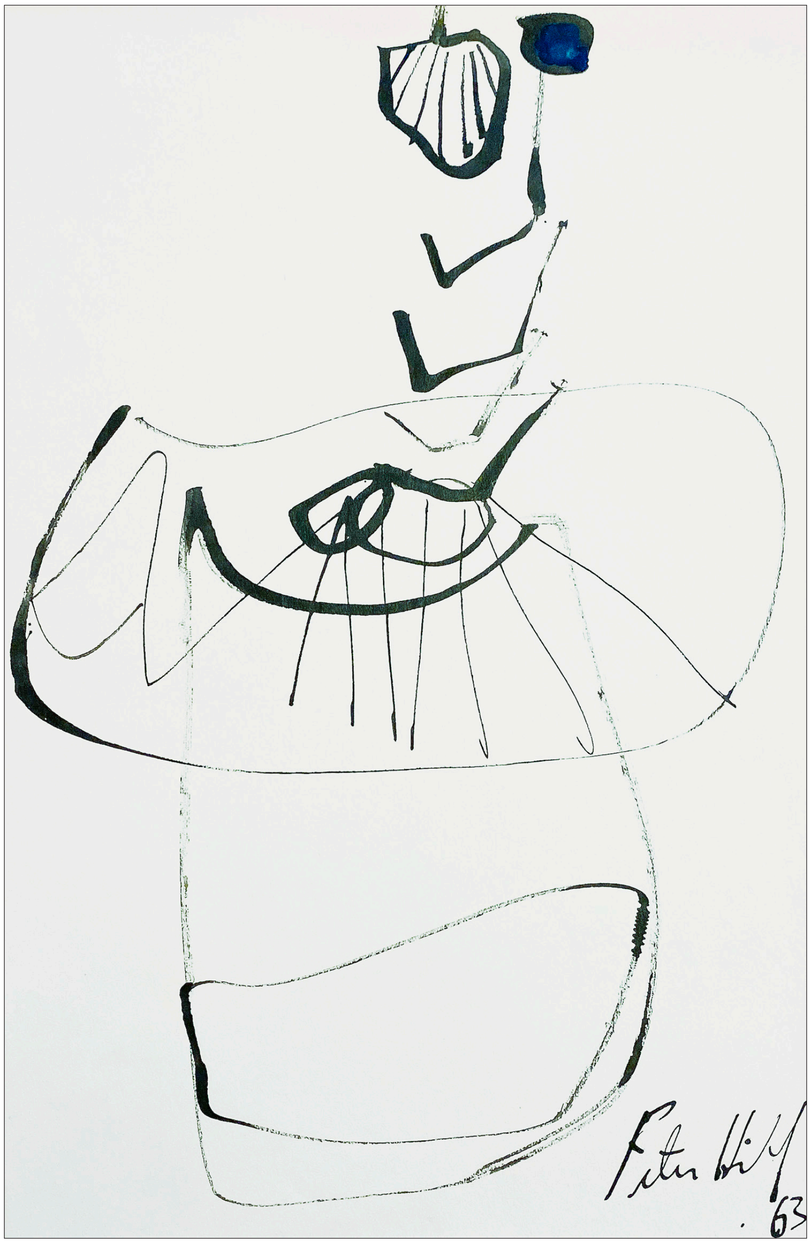


Study for *The Damned*

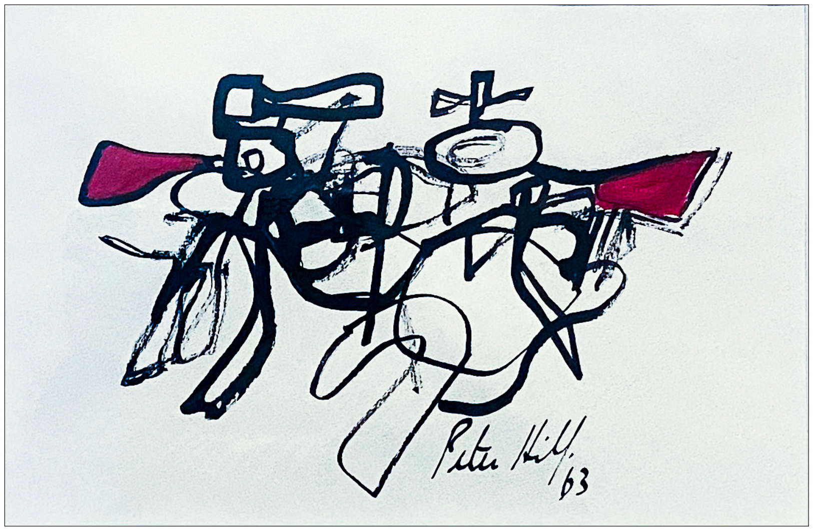
1962. Oil on canvas.


Peter Hill
'63

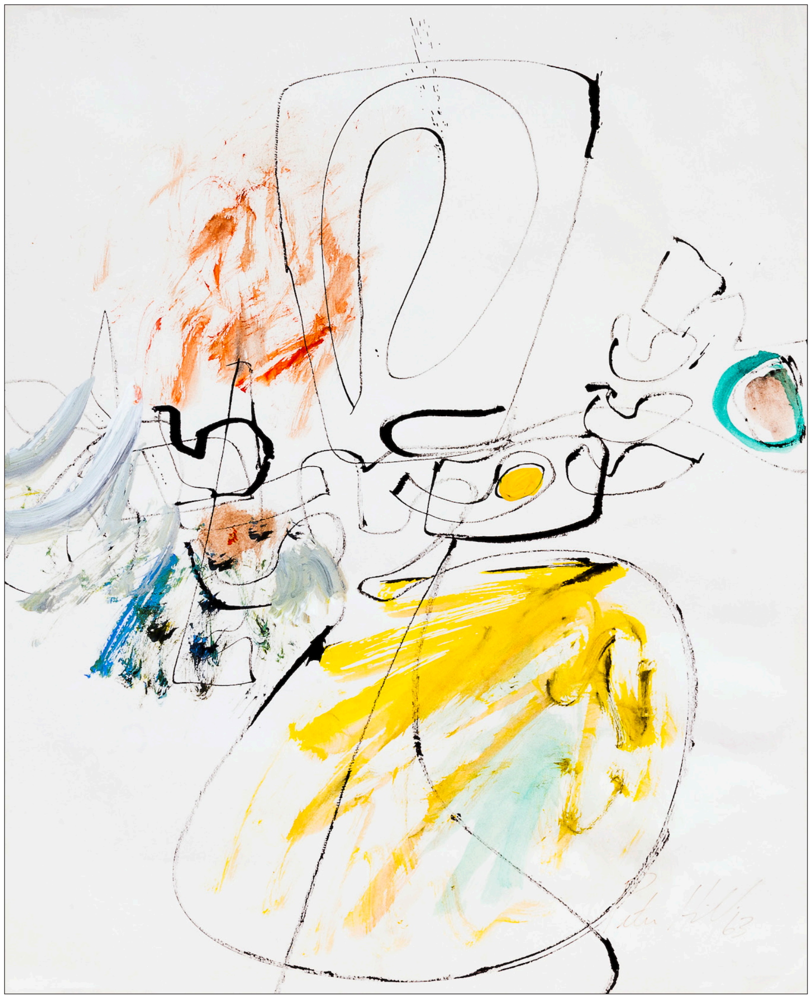
Untitled, 1963. Ink and gouache, 17.5 x 11.5 in.
Collection of Gina and Terry Mitchell.


Peter Hill
'63

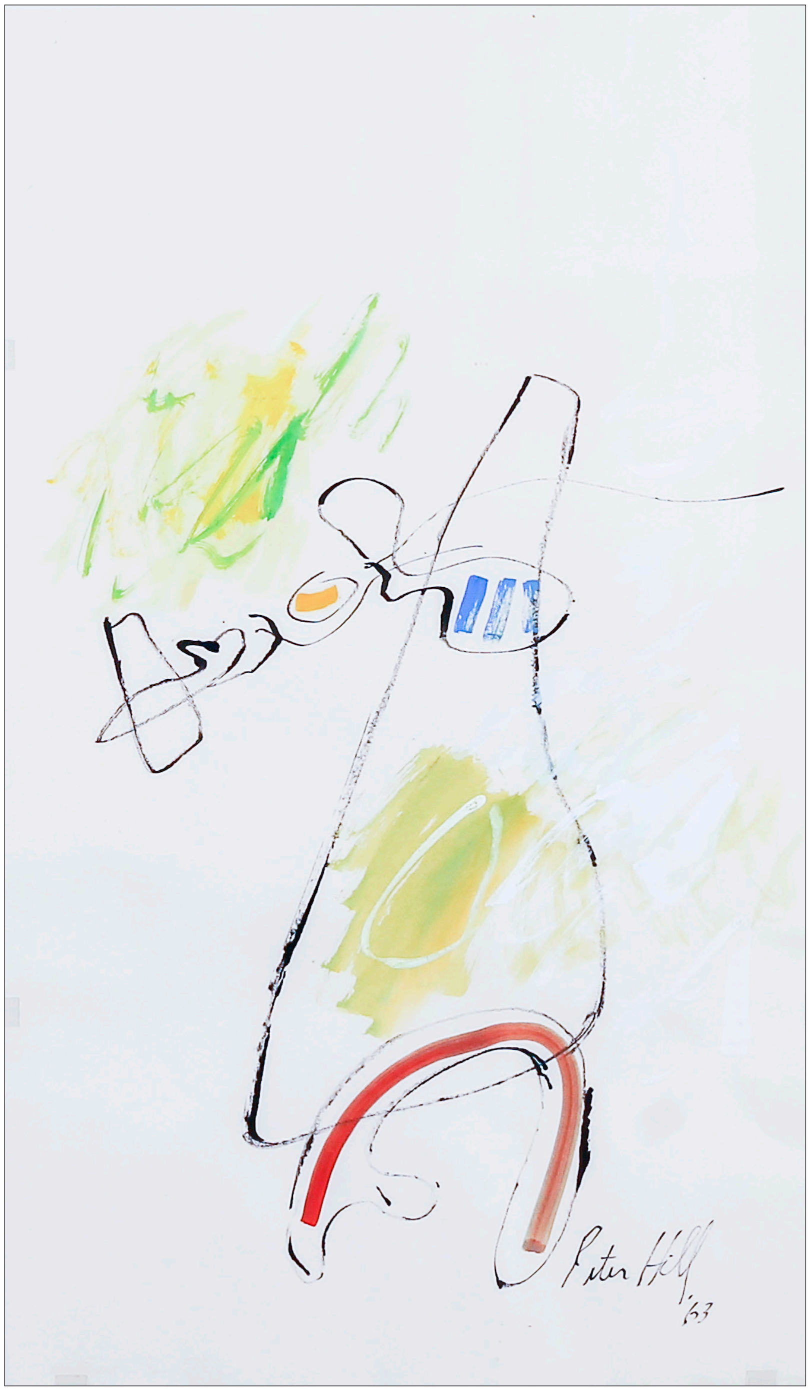
Untitled, 1963. Ink, 17.5 x 11.5 in.
Collection of Gina and Terry Mitchell.



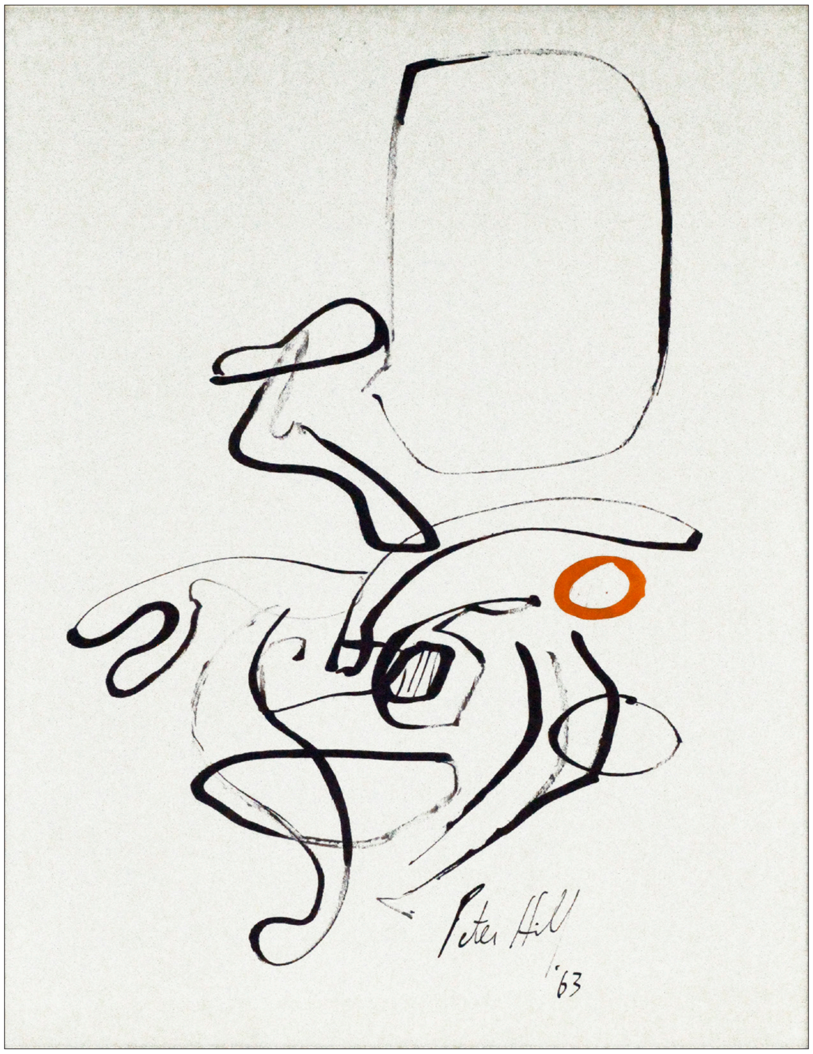
Untitled, 1963. Ink and gouache.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



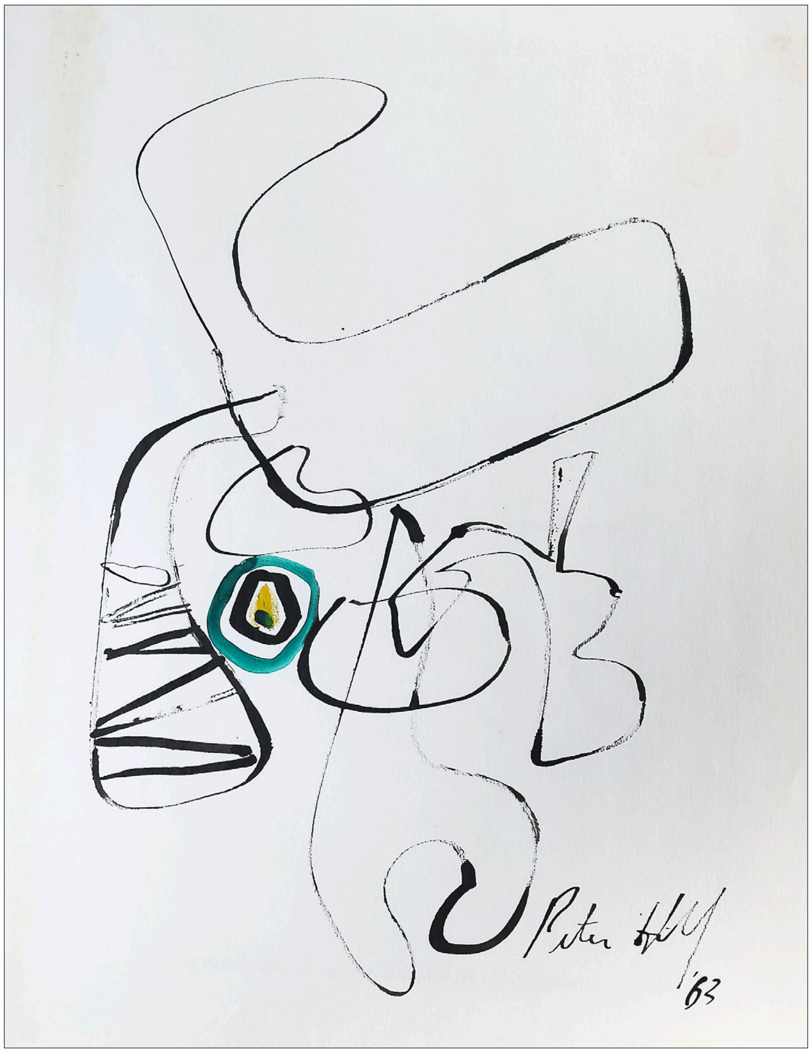
Untitled, 1963. Ink and gouache, 20.25 x 16 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



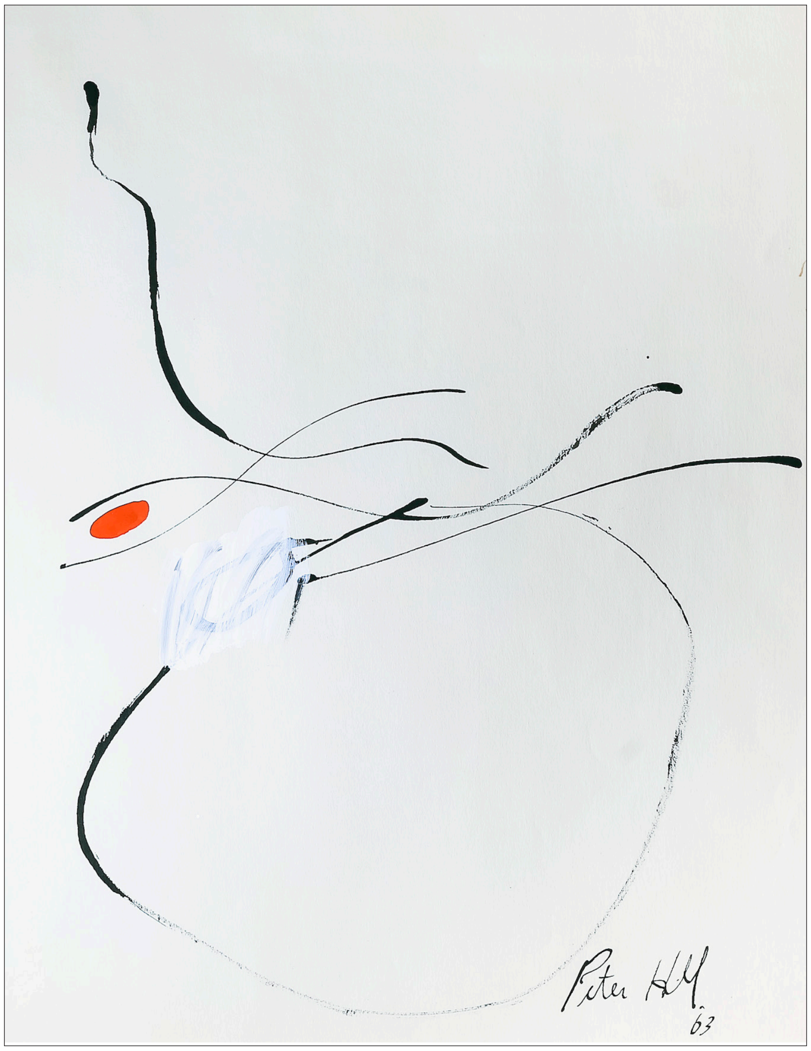
Untitled, 1963. Ink, watercolor, and gouache, 24 x 12 in.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.


Peter Hill
'63

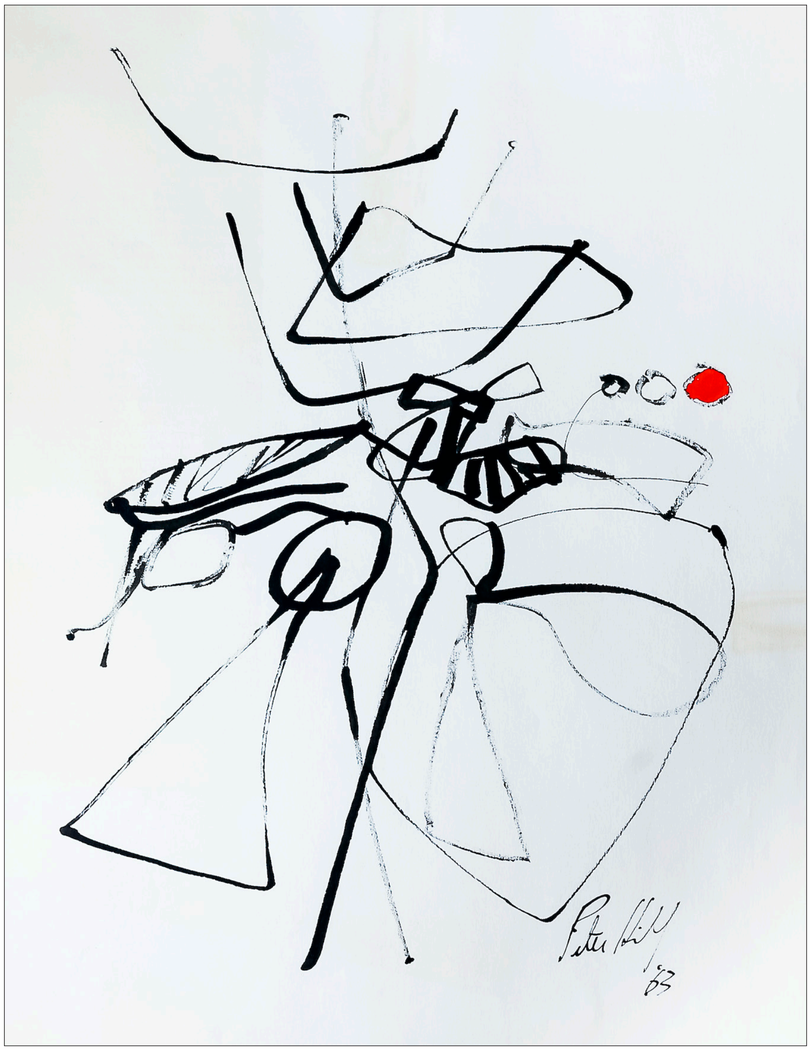
Untitled, 1963. Ink on paper, 22 x 17 in.
Collection of Lynn Turner Sousley.


Peter Hill
'63

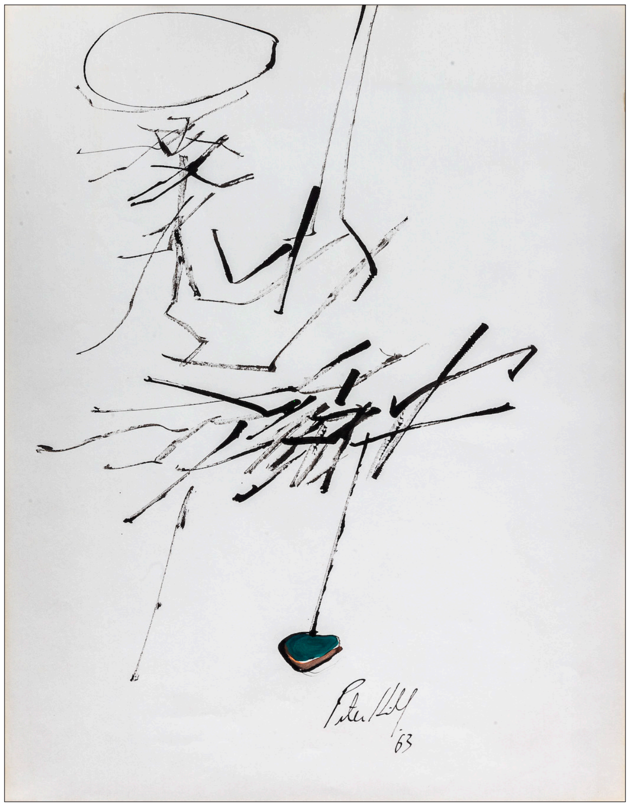
Untitled, 1963. Ink on paper, 22 x 17 in.
Collection of Jack Hill.



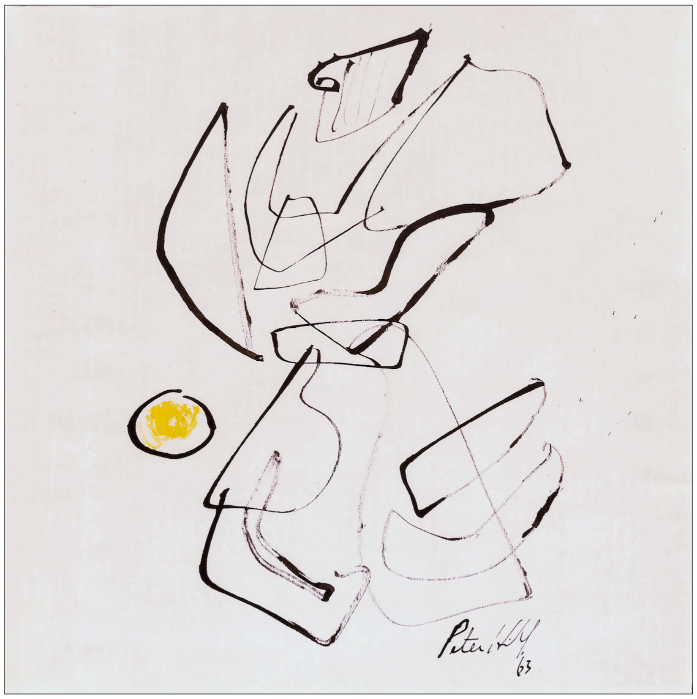
Untitled, 1963. Ink on paper, 22 x 17 in.
Collection of Jack Hill.



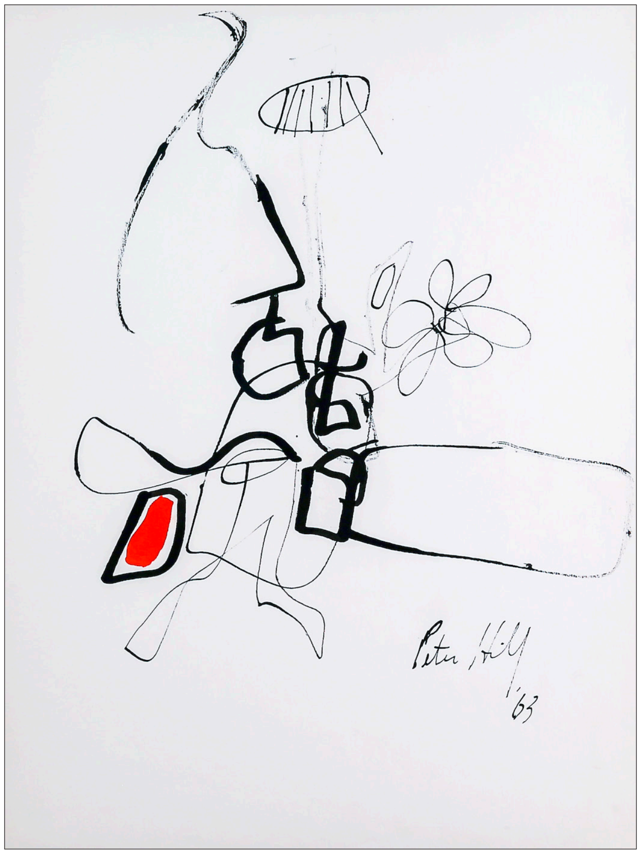
Untitled, 1963. Ink on paper, 22 x 17 in.
Collection of Jack Hill.



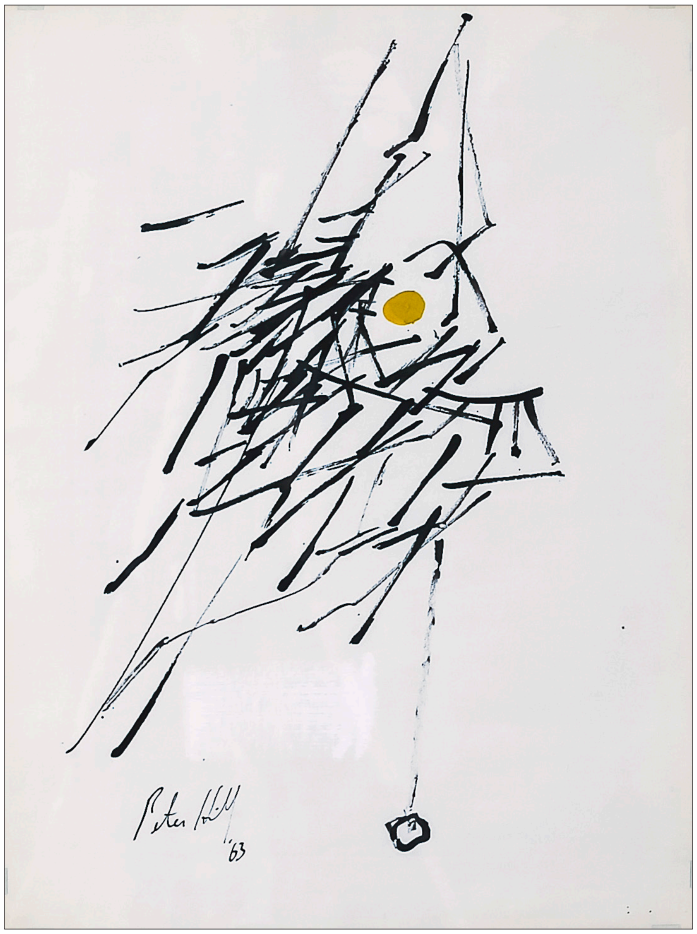
Untitled, 1963. Ink and gouache, 24 x 18 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



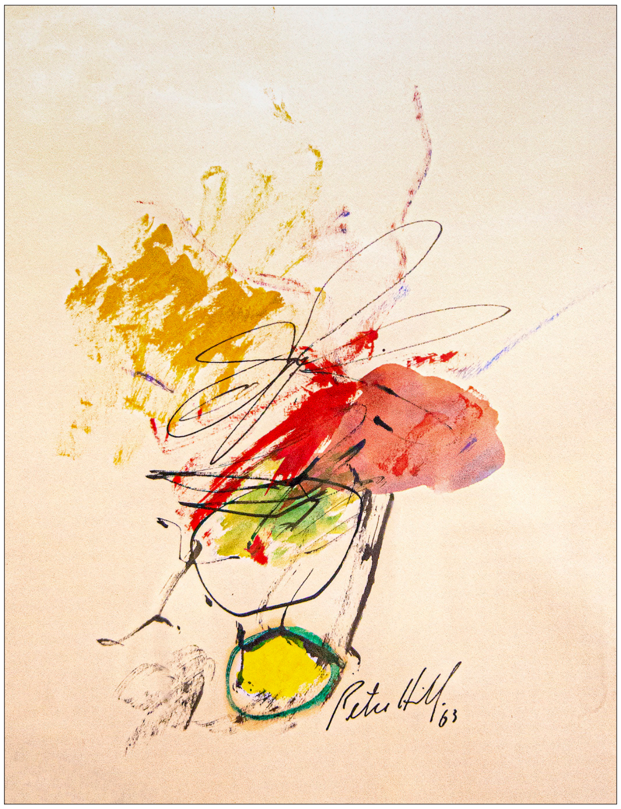
Untitled, 1963. Ink and gouache on paper, 18 x 18 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



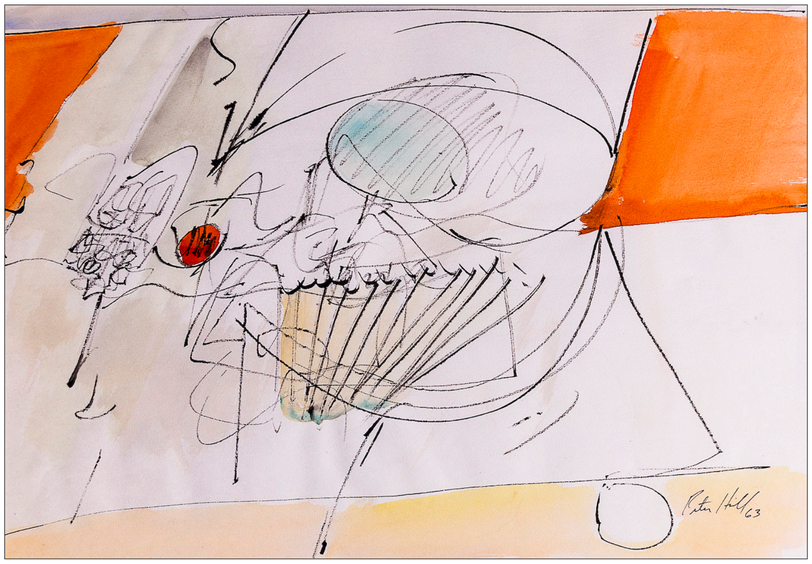
Untitled, 1963. Ink and gouache, 24 x 18 in.
Collection of Meghan Freeman and Evan Porter.



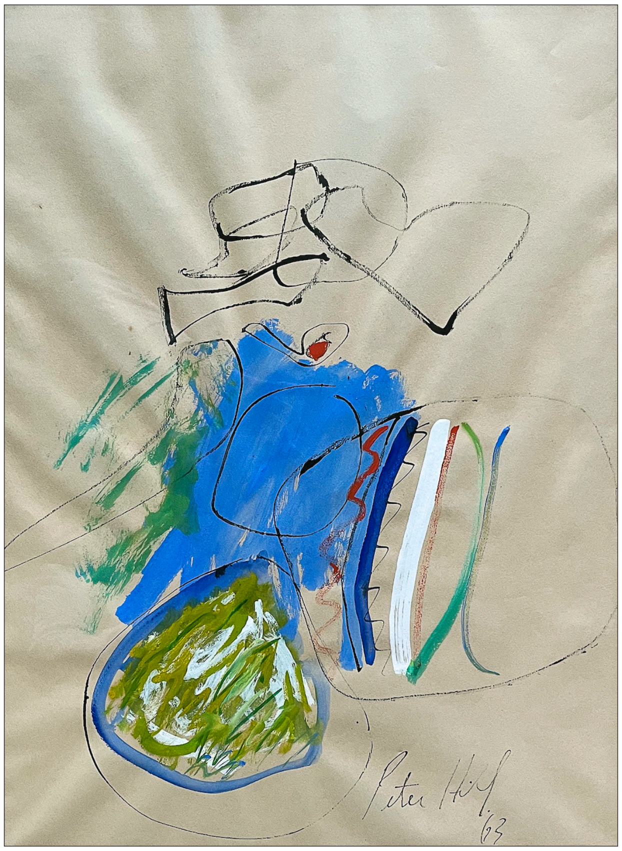
Untitled, 1963. Ink and gouache on paper, 24 x 18 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



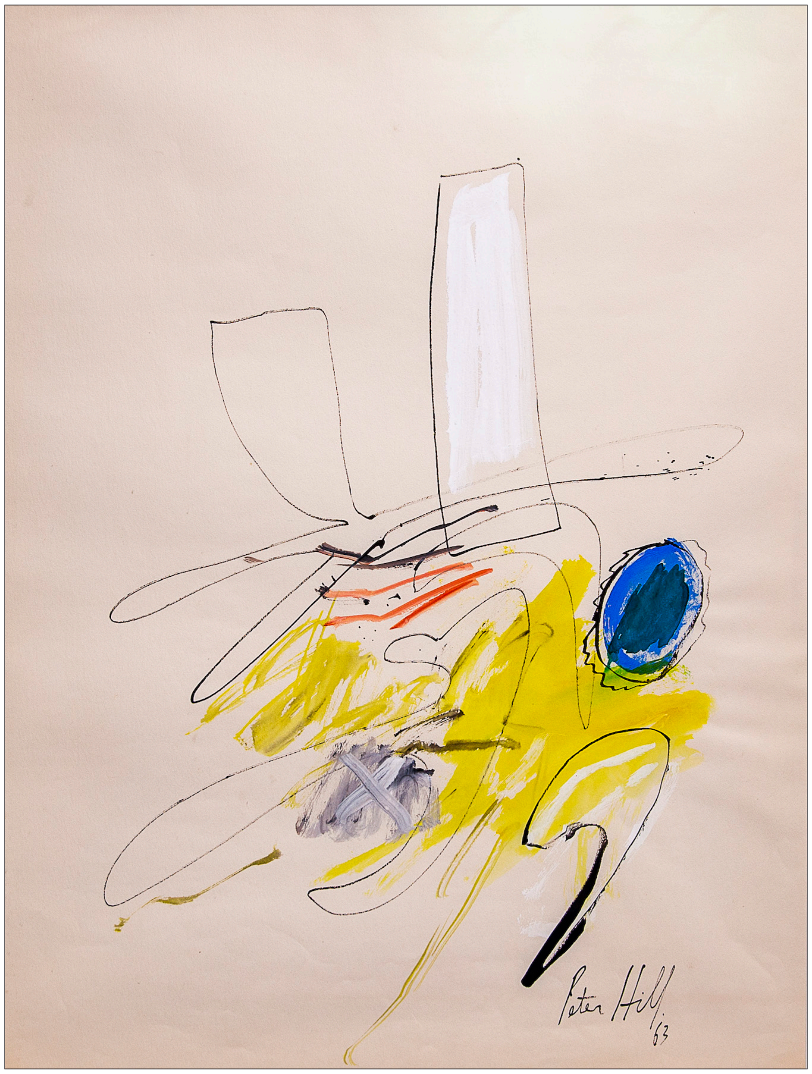
Untitled, 1963. Ink and watercolor.
Collection of Charles and Kathy Campbell.



Untitled, 1963. Ink and watercolor on paper, 12 x 17 in.
Collection of Stephen and Leslie Hill.



Untitled, 1963. Ink and gouache, 20.5 x 15 in.
Collection of Patrick Rock.



Untitled, 1963. Ink and gouache on paper, 24 x 18 in.
Collection of Stephen and Leslie Hill.

Dundee and West Omaha Sun, February 15, 1962

Modern Painter Is Only Truly Free Person Today, Says Artist Peter Hill

PETER HILL . . . with one of his abstract still lifes (at shoulder)

"When I paint, the impact of the line, the form, the color and the very paint itself are the most important things. The subject is just a means to the end."

Peter Hill, the 28-year-old assistant professor of art at the University of Omaha whose one-man show at Joslyn Art Museum ended this week, paints mostly in the abstract, but also does some work in the "non-objective."

"I am getting further away from the non-objective all the time, and more and more toward the abstract.

"Non-objective paintings have no subject matter," Hill says. "They are designs rather than subjects, and the design itself becomes the subject of the painting. Within that realm, the artist can select lines, colors, forms to show a mood. The paintings mean a hundred things to a hundred different people. The viewer can bring anything he wants to the painting.

"Modern painting is very personal, like a poem by Browning," he says. "The reader doesn't feel Browning's feelings as Browning wrote the poem, but rather feels the poem within his own experience. So it is with modern art.

"Most people think of abstract art as anything they don't understand. But abstract art really is using a subject and simply 'abstracting' it. I paint figures, landscapes, and still life. They are my subjects, but it's the way in which I paint them that is important to me."

It wasn't always this way with Peter Hill.

Born in Detroit, he attended Albion College (1952–56), majored in economics and, after a fashion, in art. And that was a result of a beginning course in sculpture he took as a freshman. He intended to continue on to graduate school, to receive his master's degree in economics and then to go into law.

Attends Top School

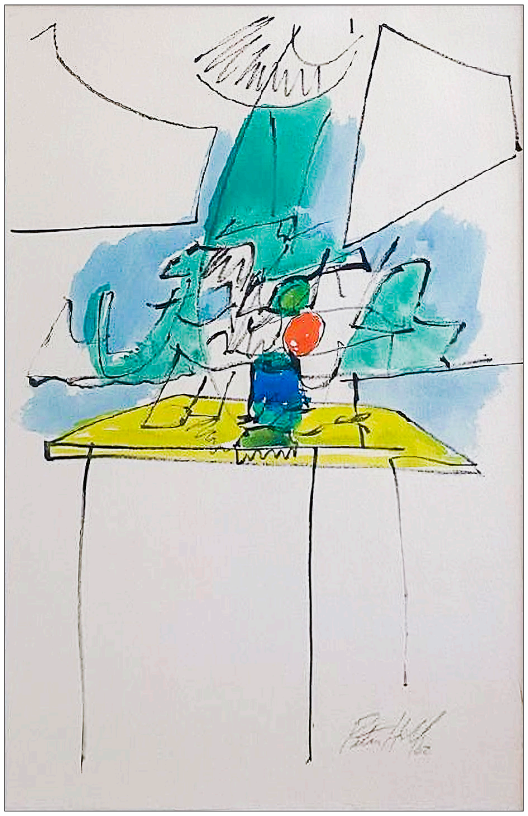
Secretly he harbored a desire to be an artist but didn't think he was good enough. Almost on a lark he applied to the Cranbrook Academy of Art at Bloomfield Hills, Mich., one of the world's top art schools. Though sculpture was still his main interest, he used one of his oil paintings for the application.

"I couldn't afford the expensive tools of sculpture, so I applied on my oils, and I was accepted."

Working as an accountant while he was in graduate school, he studied two years and received his master of fine arts degree from Cranbrook in 1958.

"In those days, I was a 'precisionist,' but not a very precise precisionist. I was trying to develop a keen sense of composition, but I didn't like what I was producing. So I decided to 'free up.'

"I saw a show at Albion by a group of painters who called themselves 'Zen '49.' Their art was an extension of the German philosophy of freedom of the mind. I liked what was happening.



Untitled (*Table Study*), 1962.
Ink and watercolor on paper, 18 x 12 in.
Collection of Eddie Wintroub.

"I began doing more and more work in the non-objective and eventually in the abstract. Today I try to catch the enthusiasm of our dynamic times. I guess I really am a product of the twentieth century."

Hill feels that "probably the only person in society today who truly has freedom is the painter. The only other person who comes close to that freedom is the modern composer, but even he is more restricted than the artist.

"The modern artist does not fight the art of the past. He studies past art, appreciates it, even incorporates it into his work. But he has so much more freedom."

Hill believes that non-objective art is going the way of abstract expressionism, or action painting. "When any art is thoroughly studied it becomes academic."

Ten Years Behind

"I was taught during the abstract expressionist era. Such art is strictly a product of the emotion. The very act of painting becomes more important than the painting itself. The weakness of this action painting is that you are not even supposed to think of what you are doing as you paint. Young people today who are trying to be Jackson Pollocks or Franz Klines of today are about ten years behind their times.

"I believe that the intellect is very important in art. I believe that emotion is also important, if sincerely felt. But art with intellect is truly art, and art with no intellect, strictly emotion, is not art.

"Today a painter uses both his intellect and his emotion. But each artist must strike his own balance."

Peter Hill tries to help his students achieve their balance in their art. He becomes a guide as they create in the style in which they are best suited.

"I love teaching," Hill says. "I think I receive as much satisfaction from teaching as from painting. I want my students to be successful, and I watch them gain a sense of sureness, even if it is very limited.

"But I only want to teach serious students. In fact, I demand that they be serious about their art. That's why I am teaching at the college level."

While he teaches, he continues his own art. He does water colors, sculpture, and drawing in pen and ink, charcoal, and pencil, besides his oils.

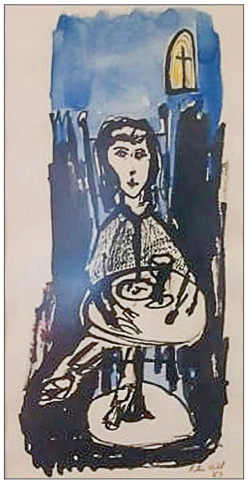
Hill's show at Joslyn was his third one-man show, his first in Omaha.

He has participated twice in the Mid-American [sic] Exhibition; won first prize in the 1960 and honorable mention in the 1961 Associated Artists of Omaha outdoor show; an honorable mention in the Sioux City May Show in 1961; an honorable mention in the All-Nebraska Show in 1959, and participated in the Missouri Valley Show in Topeka and Lincoln in 1961. He also has shown in the Springfield, Mo., annual and in Denver.

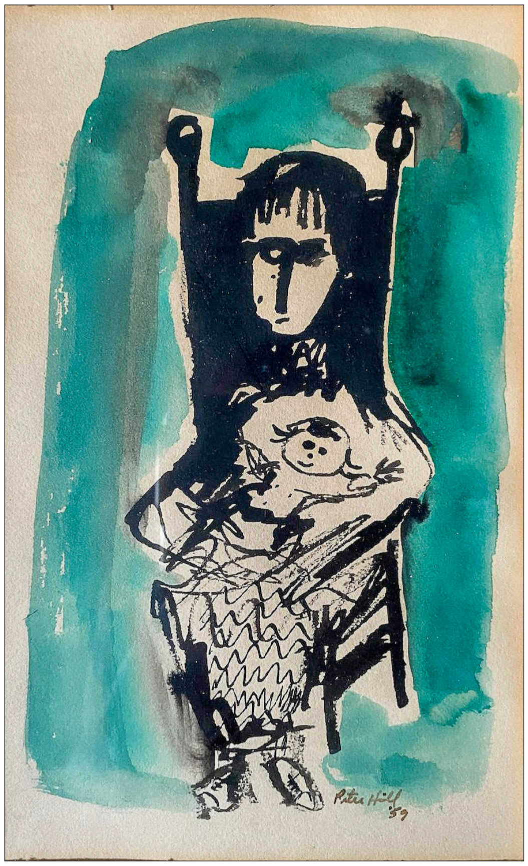
He will be represented in the Seventh Midwest Biennial, beginning at Joslyn Sunday. He will show one oil painting, "Girl at Table," completed in January.

Peter Hill and his wife, Joan, have three children: Lindsey, 3; James (Jimmie John), 1 1/2, and Peter, five months. They live at 3318 S. 122nd.

Note: The images below are unrelated to the article and made before the years of this section; there was simply no place else to fit them in the book.

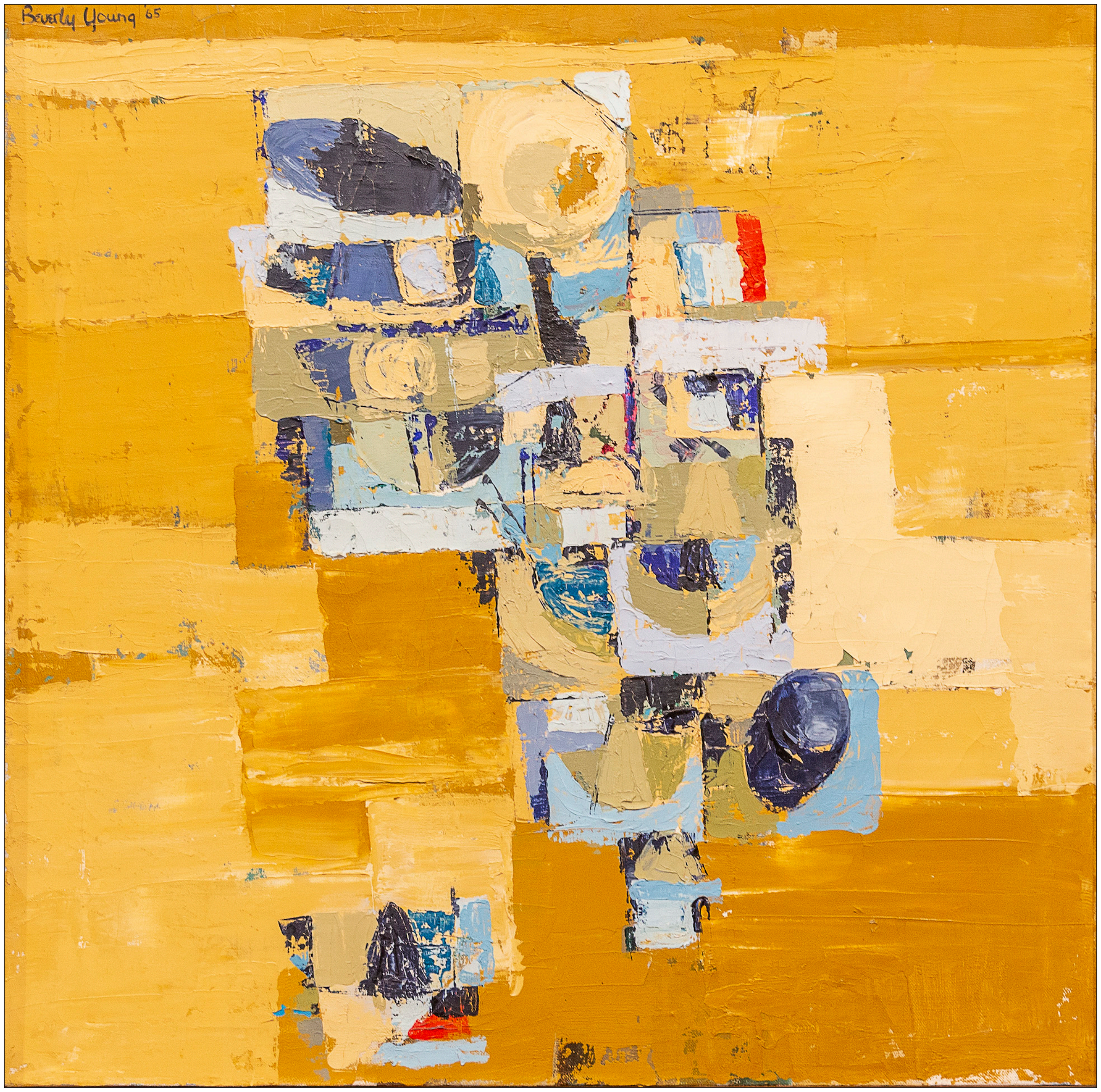


Woman at Table, 1959.
Ink and watercolor.
Collection of Louann Pearson.



Woman and Child, 1959.
Ink and watercolor, 8 x 5 in. Collection,
Meghan Freeman and Evan Porter.

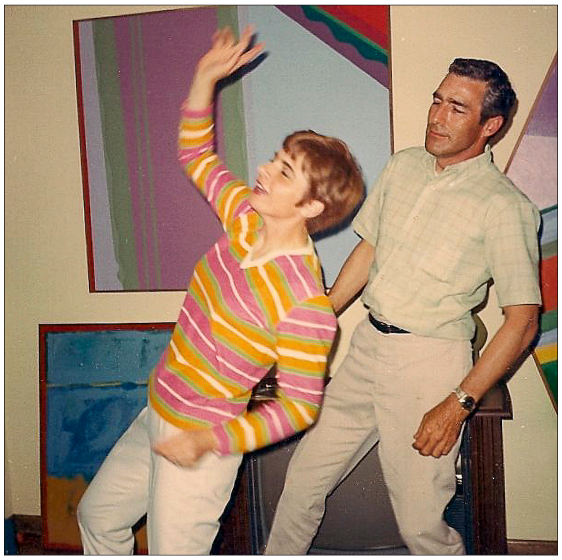
Remembrance by Beverly Young



Beverly Young. Untitled, 1965. Oil on canvas, 30.5 x 30.5 in.
Collection of Kristin and Greg Janisch.

I took a painting class from Peter at UNO a long time ago. He liked contemporary art, and I was painting that way. Peter and his wife, Jody, had moved from Detroit to Omaha, and they didn't know a lot of people yet. We all became good friends. I married my husband Byron, and we would usually spend New Year's Eve at their house. Even after we moved to Pennsylvania and then to Iowa, we were lifelong friends with Peter and Jody.

—Beverly Young



Beverly and Byron Young at the Hills' home in December 1968

Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, Lincoln, Nebraska

One-Man Show • September 30 to November 3, 1963

Daily Nebraskan,
September 30, 1963

Art Exhibit Series Begins with Hill

The Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery will open a new exhibition Tuesday, the first in a series devoted to the works of artists active in this region.

The work of Peter Hill, a member of the faculty of the University of Omaha since 1958, will be the first shown in the series.

Professor Hill, a native of Michigan, last year received the Ford Foundation Award at the Mid-America Exhibition of Art in Kansas City.

The Omaha artist has had one-man shows at Albion College, Michigan State University, and Joslyn Museum.

At the entrance to 1963 Sheldon Show

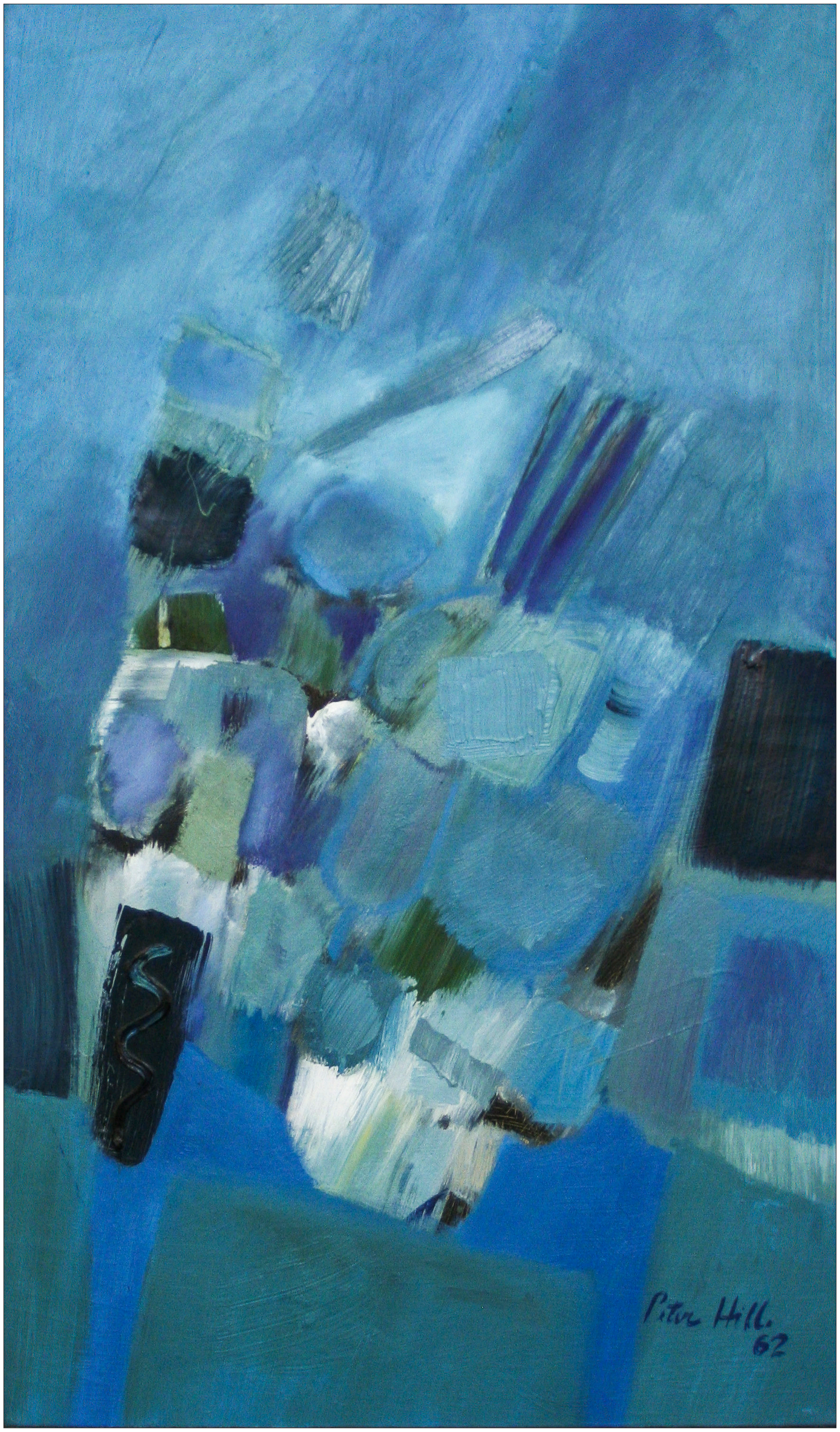
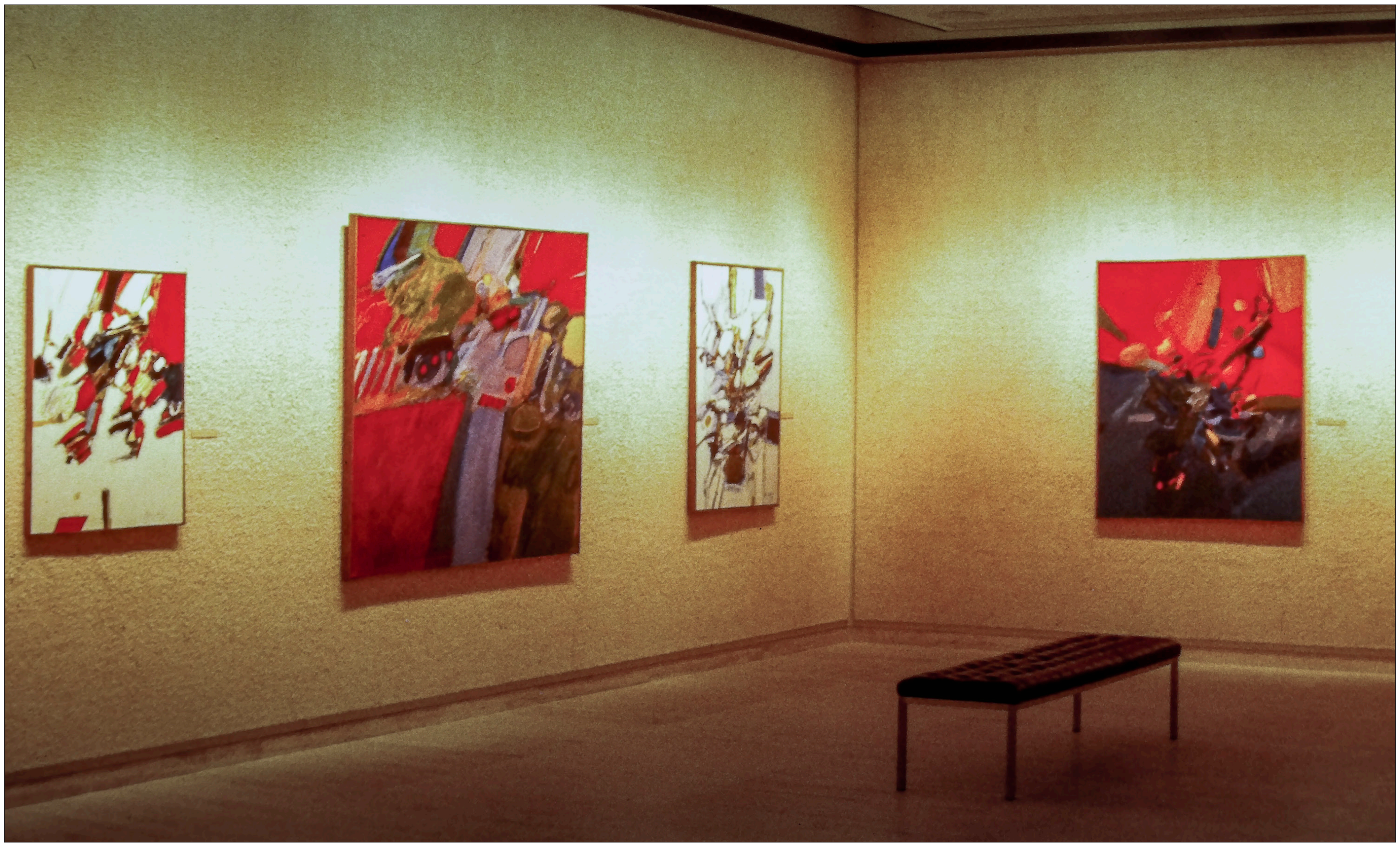
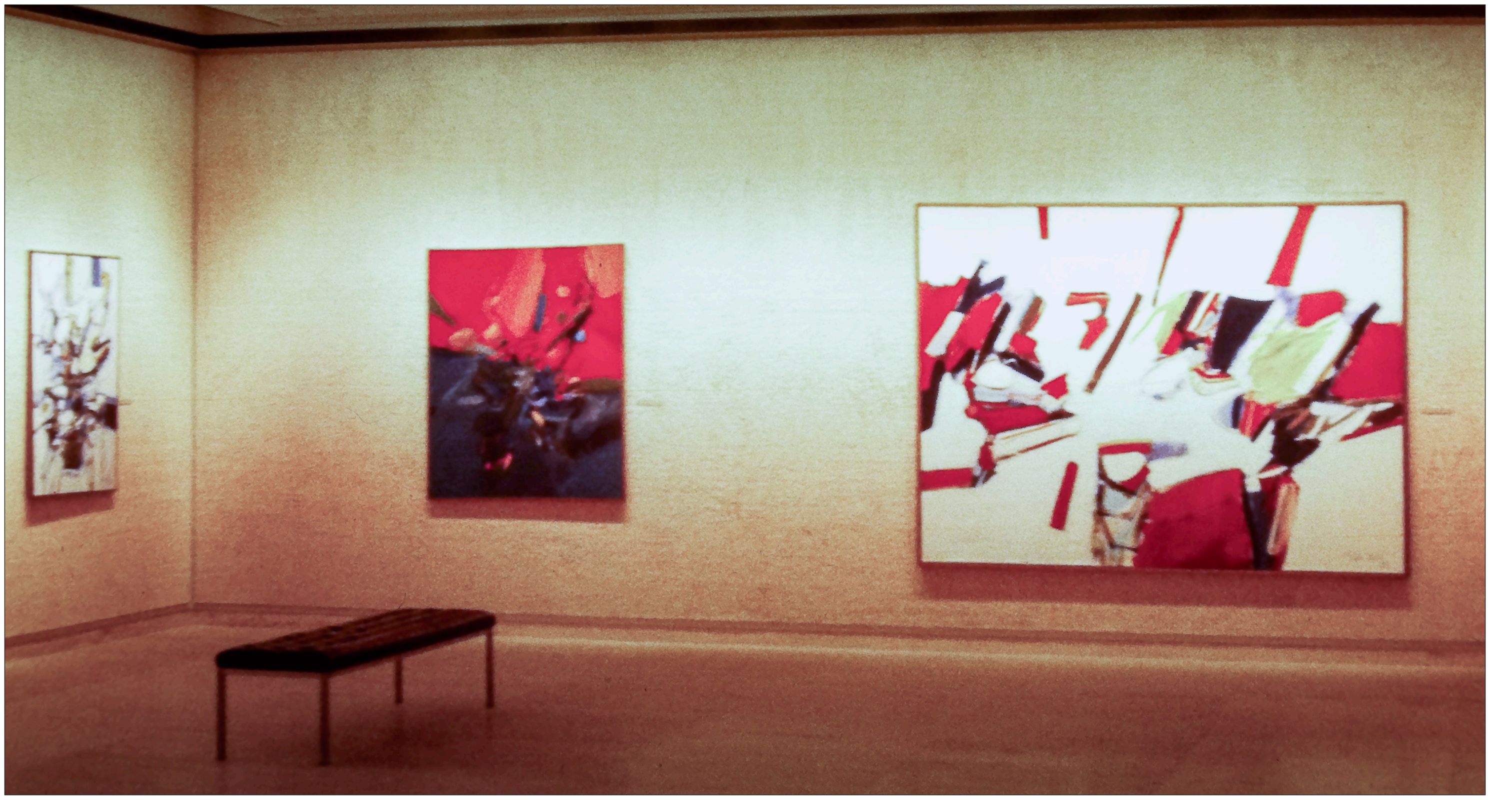


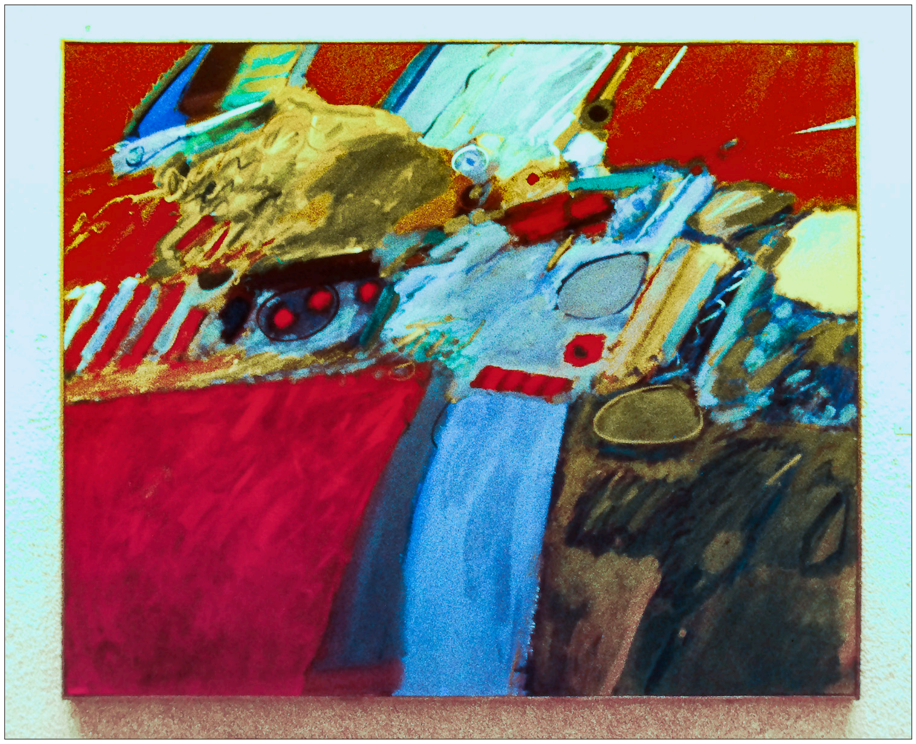
Table Study III, 1962. Oil on canvas, 31 x 19 in.
Collection of John and Barbara Musselman. Photograph by Alec Paul.



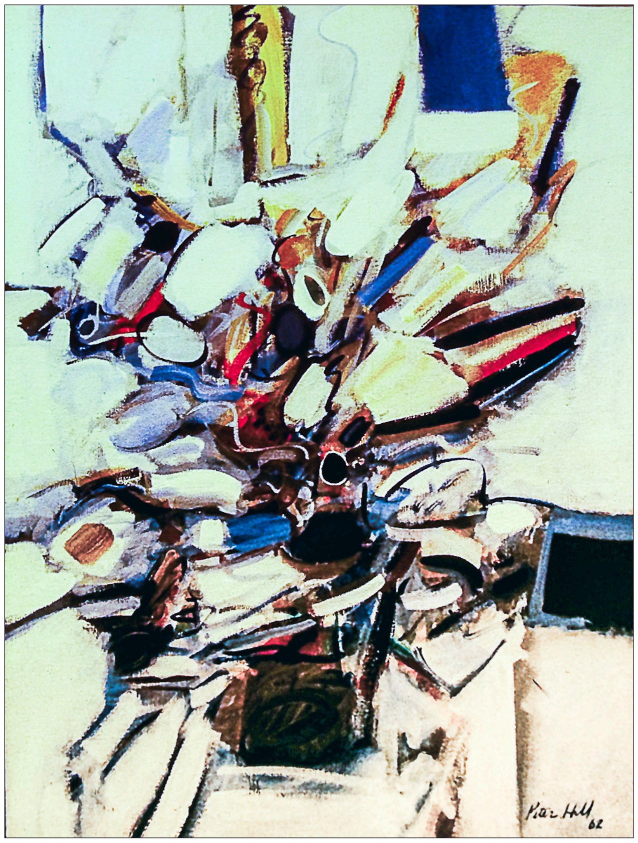
Left to right: *Composition*, *Circe*, *Condottieri*, *Icarus*



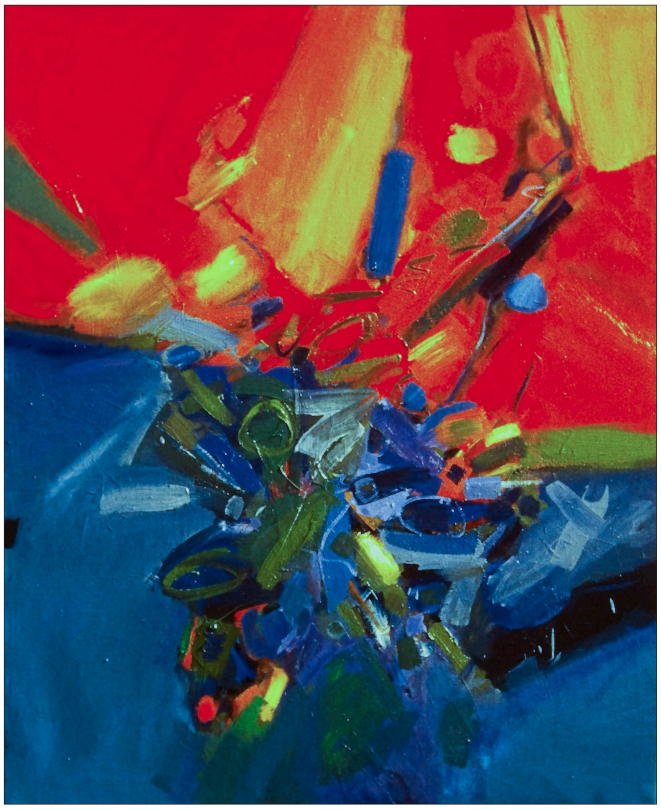
Left to right: *Condottieri*, *Icarus*, *Mme. Recamier*



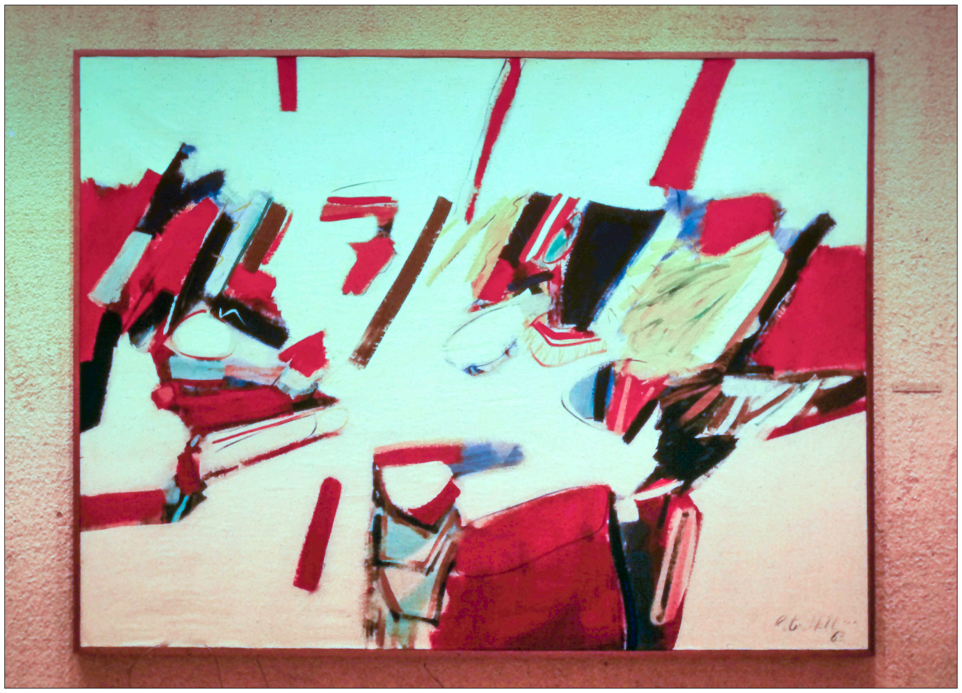
Circe, 1963. Acrylic on canvas, 65 x 69 in. Purchased by Robert Kutak.



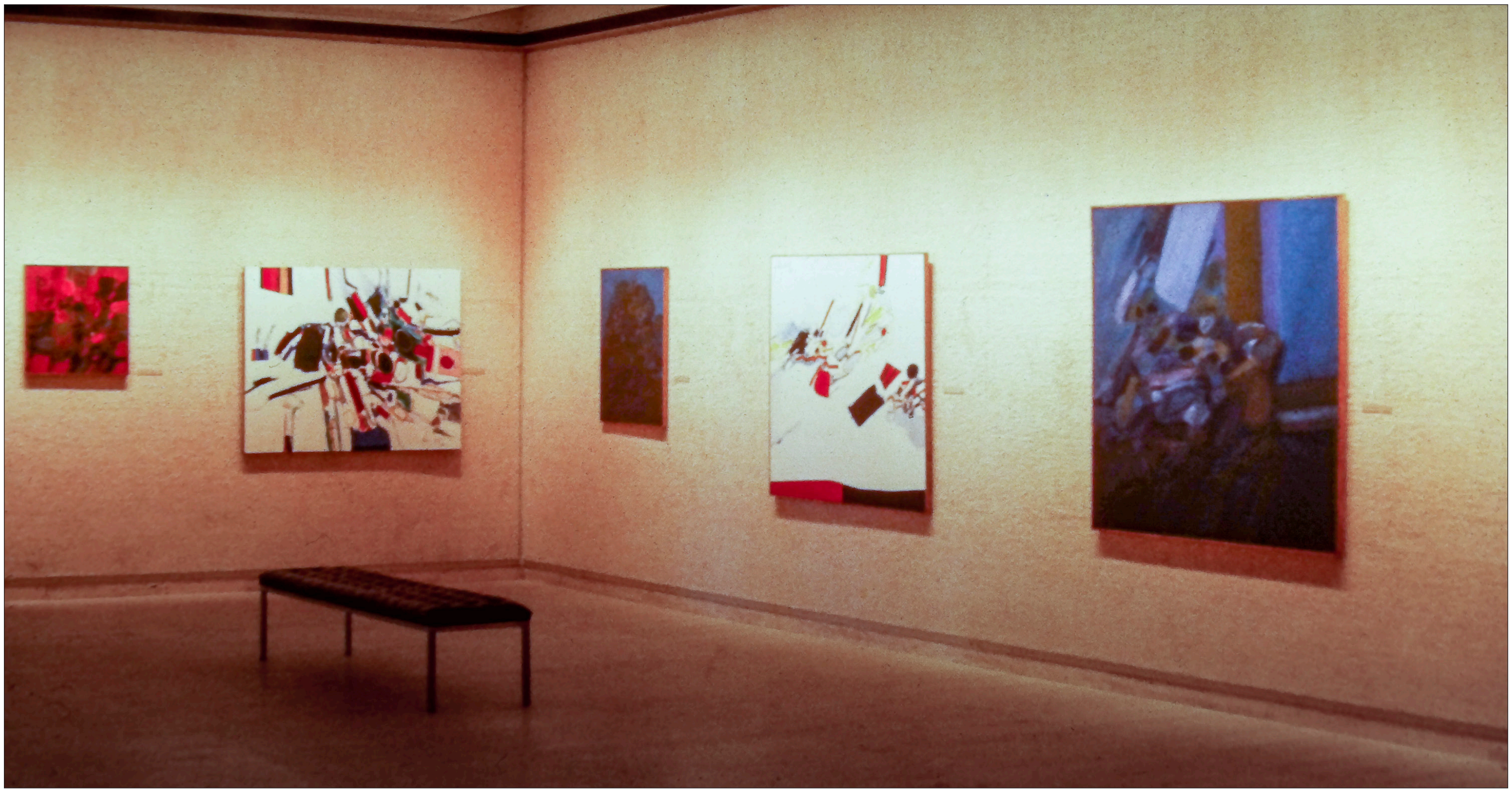
Condottieri, 1962. Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 in. Collection of Northern Natural Gas Company.



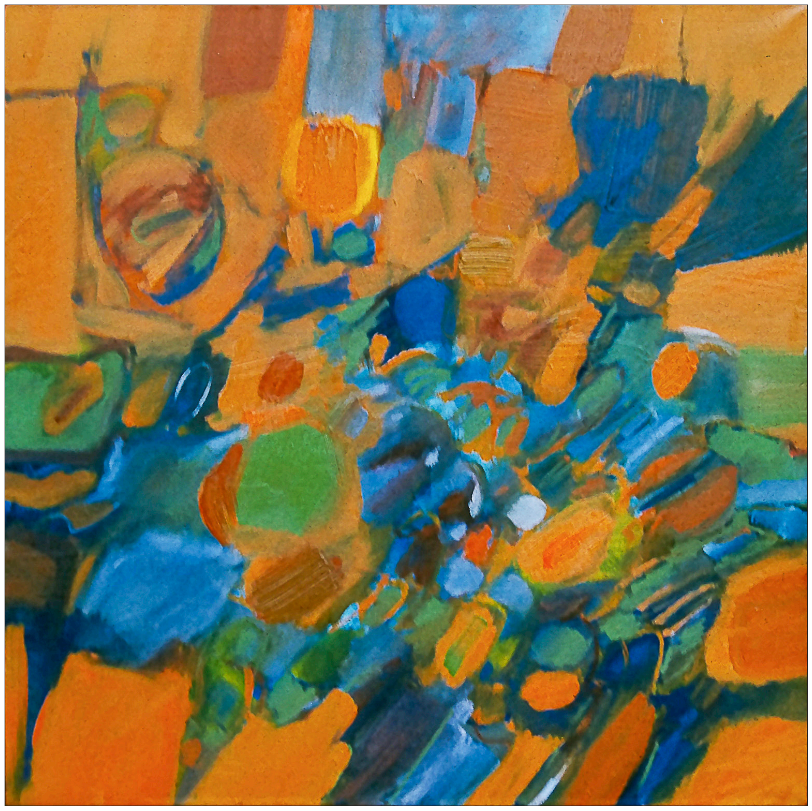
Icarus, 1962. Oil on canvas, 54 x 44 in.



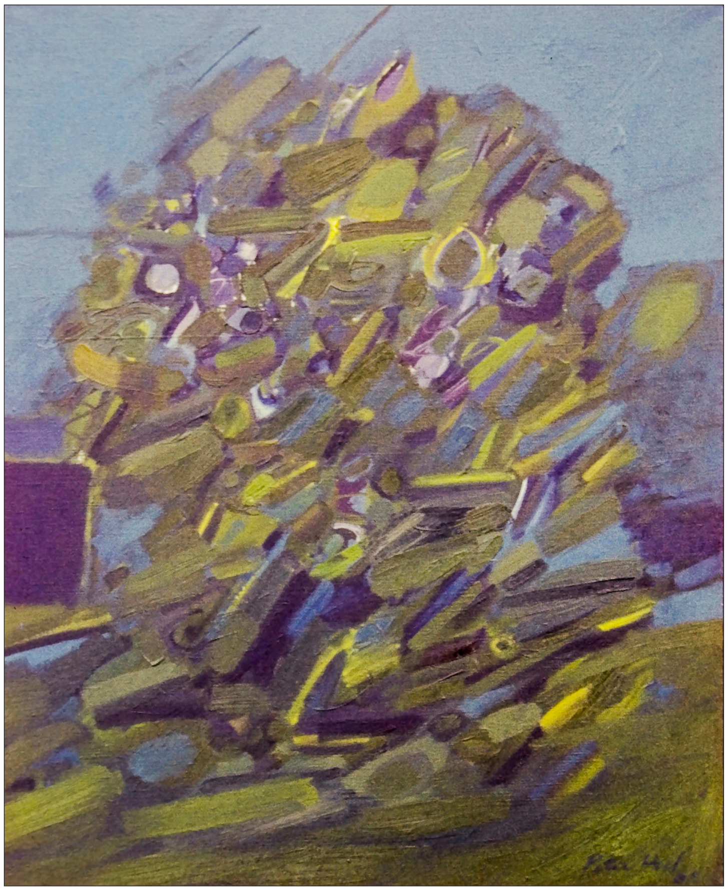
Mme. Recamier, 1963. Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 84 in.



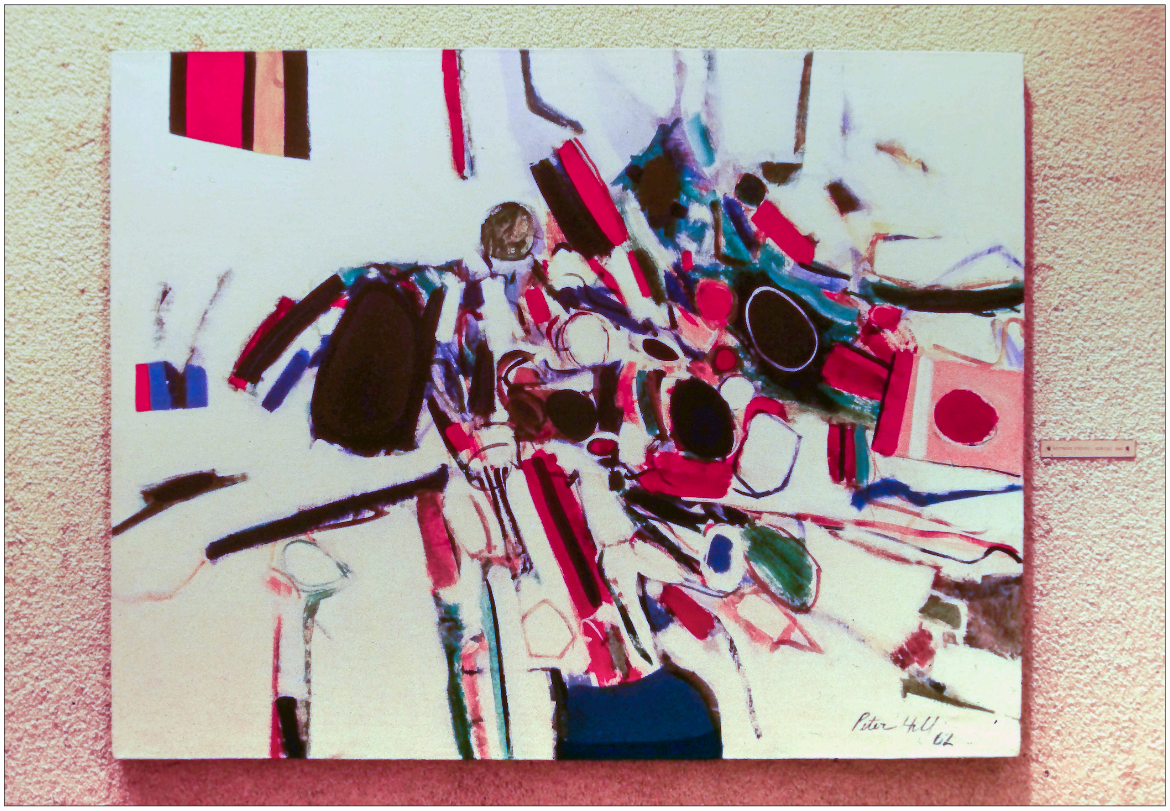
Left to right: *Warrior*, *Scythian Steppes*, *Tree*, *Syracuse*, *Minoan Garden*



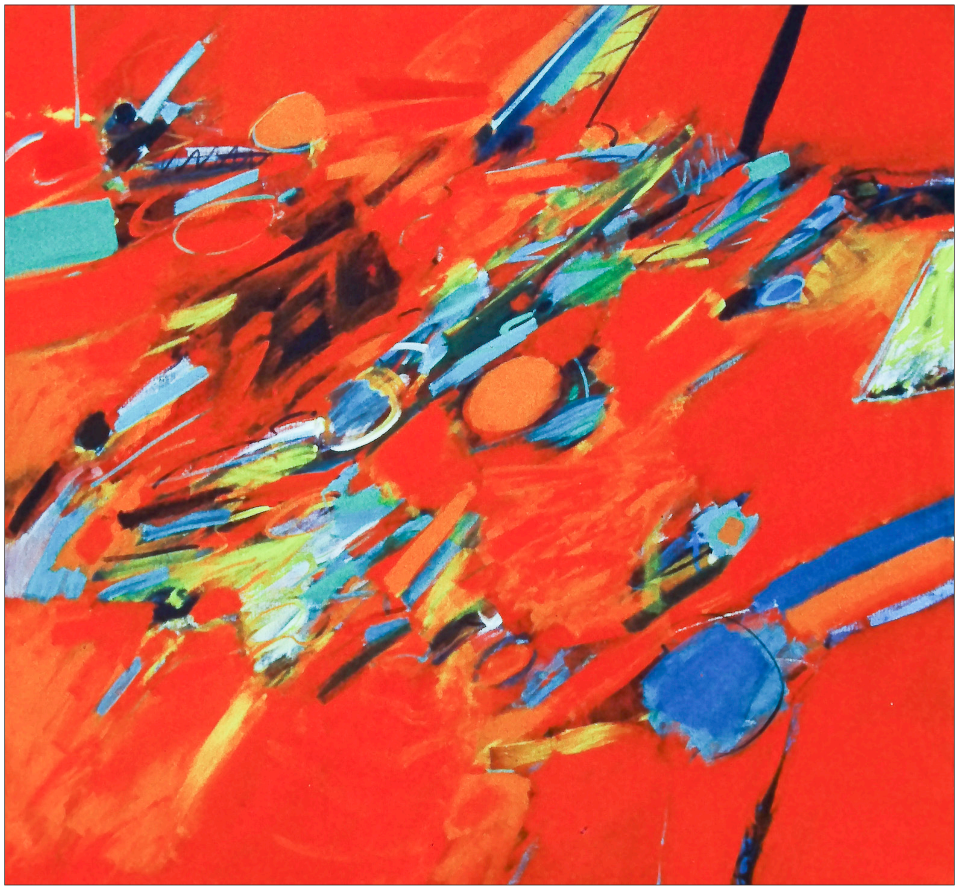
Warrior, 1962. Oil on canvas.



Tree, 1961–3. Oil on canvas.



Scythian Steppes, 1962. Acrylic on canvas.



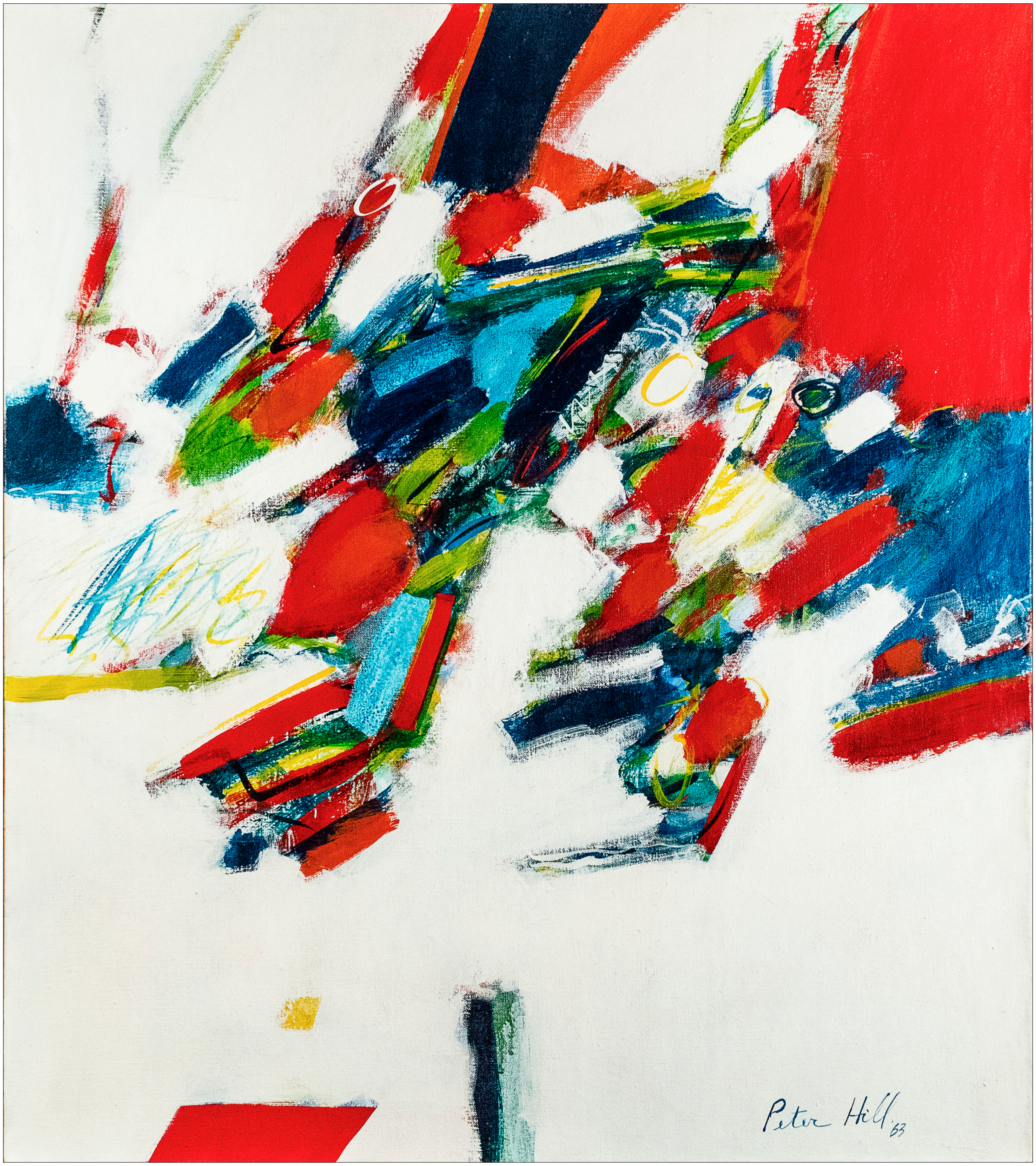
Noachian Retreat, 1963. Acrylic on canvas, 53 x 57 in.
Collection of the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.

Omaha World-Herald,
January 19, 1964

The Nebraska Art Association announces purchase of a large oil [sic], “Noachian Retreat,” by Peter Hill of Omaha.

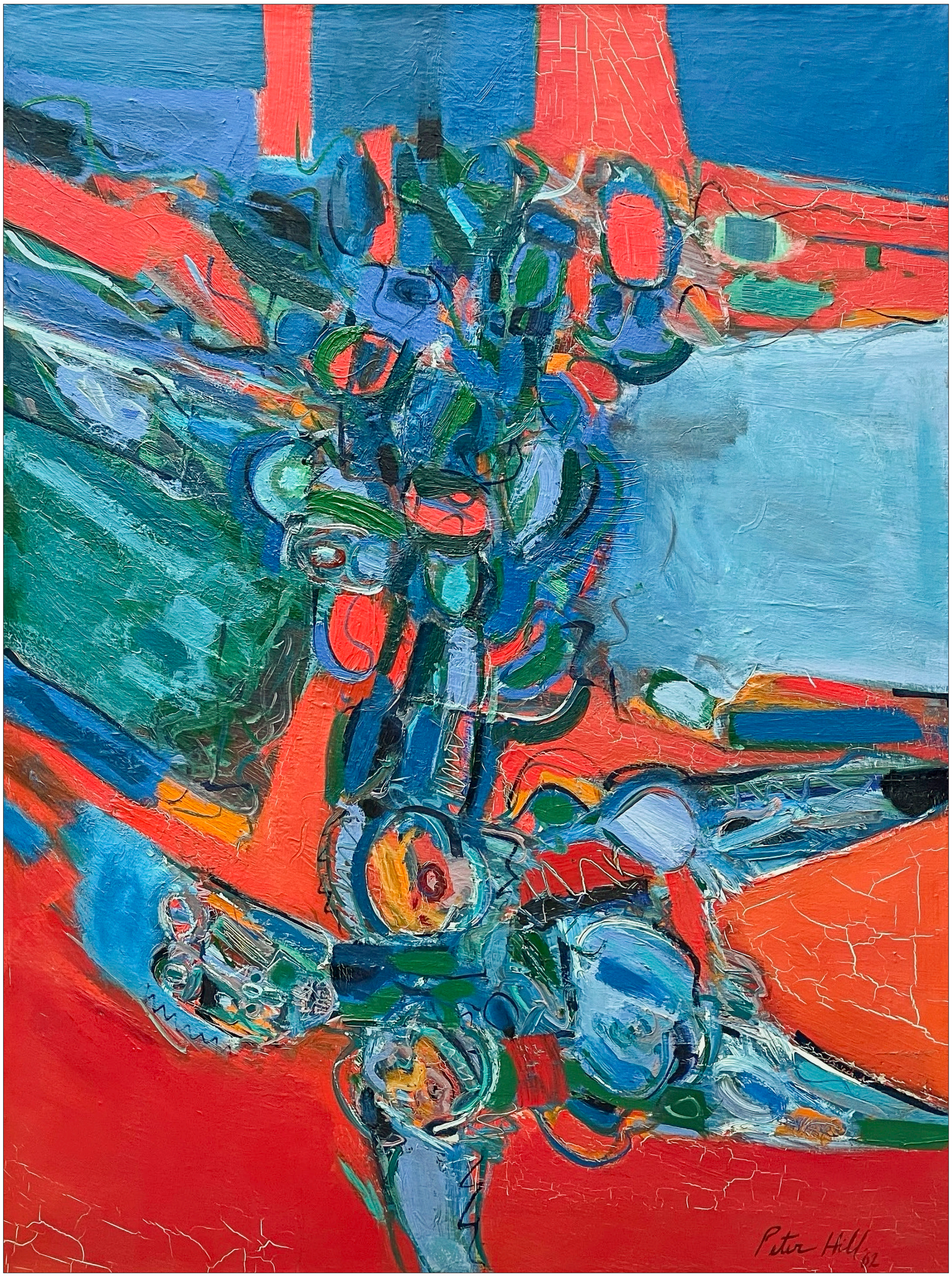
The painting was selected from Mr. Hill’s one-man show at the Sheldon Gallery, where the Association’s collection is housed.

Mr. Hill is the first Omahan to be represented in this important collection by a major work.



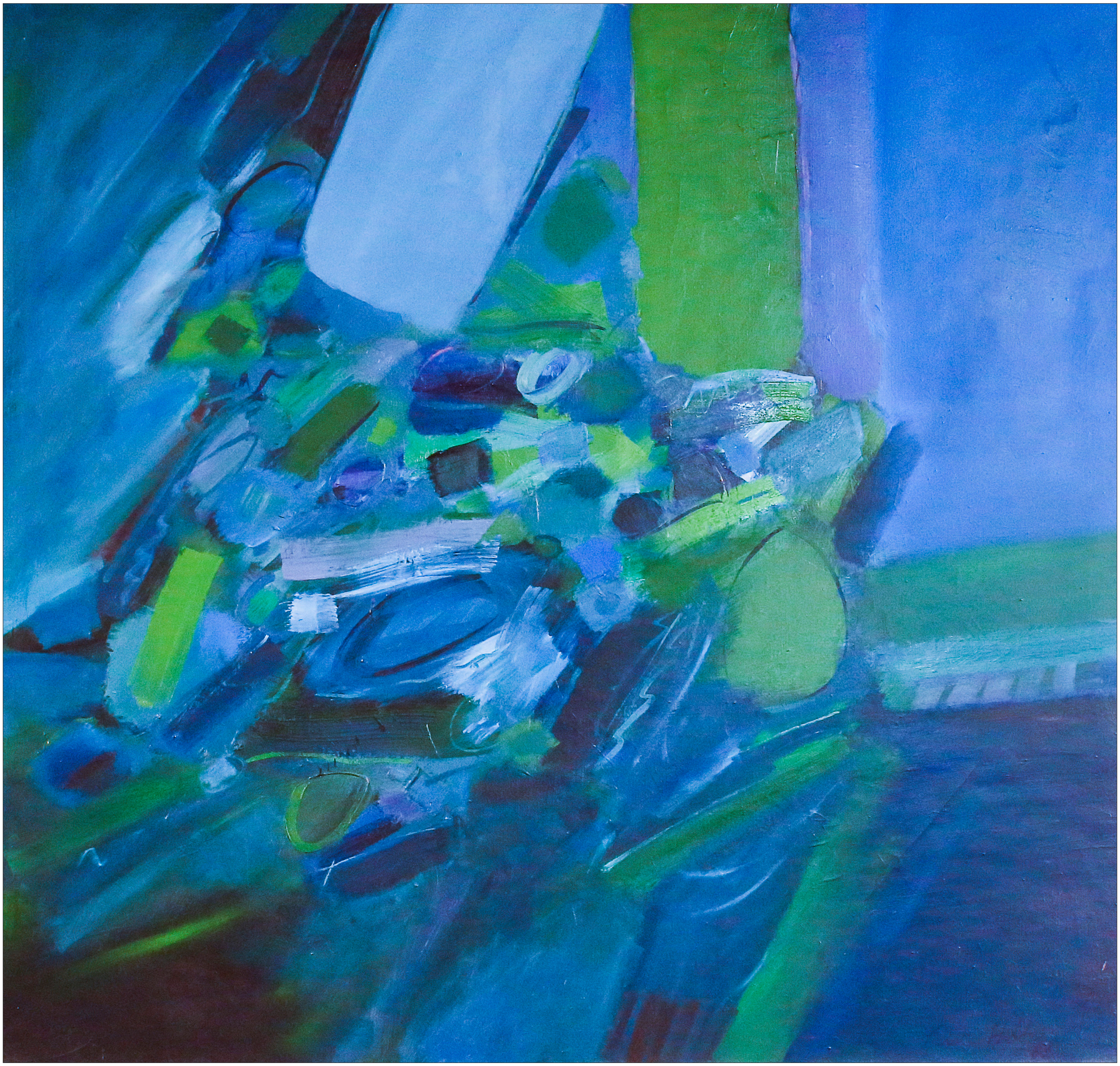
Composition

1963. Acrylic on canvas. 36 x 32 in.
Collection of the Waterloo Center for the Arts, Waterloo, Iowa.



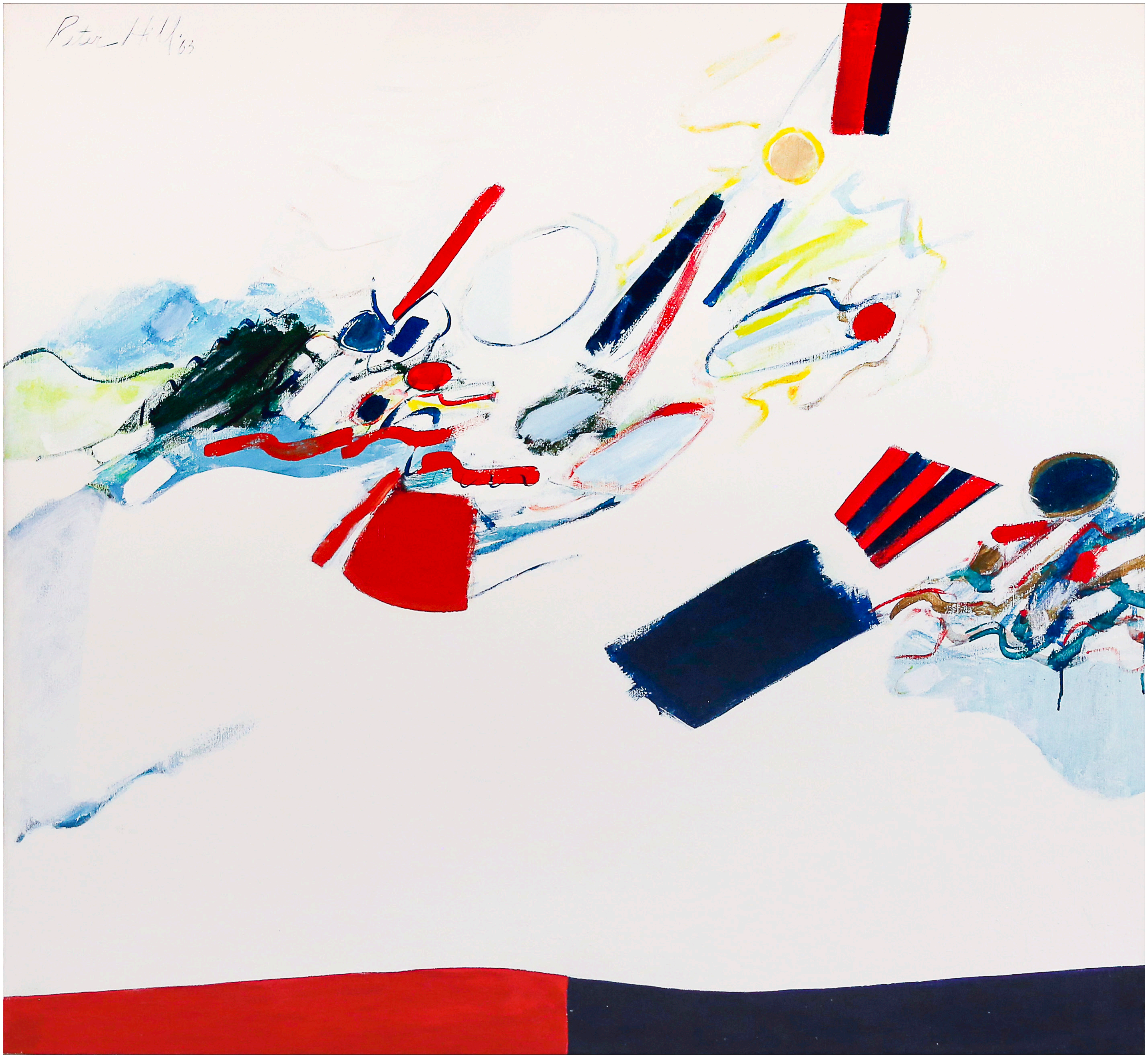
The Damned

1962. Oil on canvas. Winner of the Ford Foundation Award in May 1962.
Collection of Albion College.



Minoan Garden

1962. Oil on canvas.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



Syracuse

1963. Acrylic on canvas, 54 x 48 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

Omaha World-Herald, October 1, 1963

City of Triple-Threat Talk Now Can View a Triple Treat in Art

The one-man show of 30 paintings and drawings by Peter Hill, assistant professor of art at the University of Omaha, which opened Monday night to an invited public at the Sheldon Gallery of the University of Nebraska, has three claims to rank as an historic event.

It is the first solo show in the new two-million-dollar building. It opens Lincoln's first full-scale, fall-through-spring art season. It is the first public expression of an intense interest in the contemporary art of this immediate region which—in the words of Norman Geske, Sheldon director—"we here at the gallery have long felt, but were unable to implement until the present splendid present facilities were provided."

For decades, an important segment of the Lincoln public has recognized two major sports: art and football. Both were highly seasonal. Beginning in September, people gave cocktail parties after football games. Come the last "bowl" game, and they started planning them to follow or precede the events which accompanied the month-long "art season"—the Annual Exhibition of the Nebraska Art Association in March, a yearly visual jamboree which way back in the 30's achieved All-American rating.

Publicly reported as "canape" (or sometimes "pretzel") parties, these talky gatherings undoubtedly played a role in producing a formidable end product, a schooled and numerous group of viewers who can discuss either art or football on at least three different levels.

Peter Hill's present offerings should please this discriminating Lincoln public. Most of the show is brand new. Other pieces have been loaned by the owners: Mr. and Mrs. John Offutt of Omaha; Robert Kutak of Washington, D.C.; the University of Omaha; Albion College in Michigan.

All of it is very much "the world of Peter Hill"—a world which is at once surprising and familiar, rooted in common life and urgent with the possibilities of tomorrow. And Mr. Hill always has what is called "a hand." His brush converts ordinary oil paint into an expensive spread, rich in visual vitamins.

Mr. Hill's show is an appetizing canape opening a richly packed season, which includes two other soloists from the region—sculptor Paul Granlund of Minneapolis in February and painter Byron Burford of Iowa City in May. (Major Burford paintings were purchased last year by both the Sheldon Gallery and the Joslyn Art Museum.)

As added relishes there will be "midget one-man's" by people like George Bucher of Sioux Falls, S.D., who produces truly monumental sculpture out of ordinary binder twine.

All this and the March show too—in splendid new facilities and on a budget which is still the same as it was when art shared digs with the elephants, back in Morrill Hall.

Lincoln Journal-Star, October 1, 1963

Art Group Views Peter Hill Show

Bright, gay, and primitive modern best describes Peter Hill's painting previewed by members of Nebraska Art Association at the reception Monday evening at Sheldon Art Gallery.

Viewers delighted in the fresh approach and bold use of color and design by the 30-year-old Omaha artist. The collection was as fun to view as it obviously was for Mr. Hill to paint, Lincolnites agreed.

Lincoln Journal-Star, October 6, 1963

Lincoln Diary

Nebraska booster Peter Hill and his attractive wife, Jody, were having the time of their young lives at Hill's one-man show at the Sheldon Gallery tonight.

"We got the call to come to Omaha University a few years ago and just threw all our belongings in the trailer and headed west," said Hill.

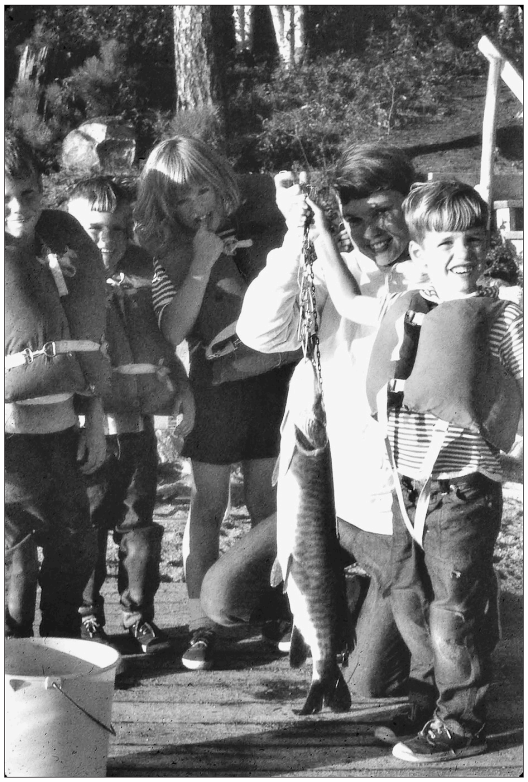
"We couldn't be more delighted with Nebraska, its people and our reception here," agreed the young artist and his wife.

Changing Styles: 1964 and 1965

The years 1964–65 saw more successes for Dad. In 1964, the Sheldon acquired *Noachian Retreat* (p. 117) and the Waterloo Center for the Arts bought *Composition* (p. 118). He had a show at Doane University in Crete, Nebraska. In 1965, the Detroit Institute of Arts exhibited *Ulysses* (p. 154), which Wayne State University purchased. His painting *Pythian* (p. 128) represented Nebraska in a touring show showing art from all 50 states.

Peter Hill with UNO professor and sculptor Sidney "Buzz" Buchanan. In the background: *Primavera* (1964).

Perhaps most significant: On August 13, 1965, he and Jody acquired their property on Edward Lake in Ontario, Canada. There they fished for walleye, muskie, smallmouth bass, and perch. Also, there were fresh berries: strawberries in May, raspberries in June, and blueberries in late July and early August. He and Jody spent every summer there until his death in April 2020.



Jim, Peter, Lindsey, Jody, and Steve with a muskie on Edward Lake, Canada

Of course, Robert Kutak kept buying Dad's works. And now I need to address a minor elephant in this room. The elephant (i.e., at least two of my dad's true friends and mentors) claims that Bob's patronage negatively affected Peter Hill's career as an artist.

This is quite a claim to make, not the least because several former Kutak lawyers are reading this. But being good lawyers, they'll at least want to hear the argument.

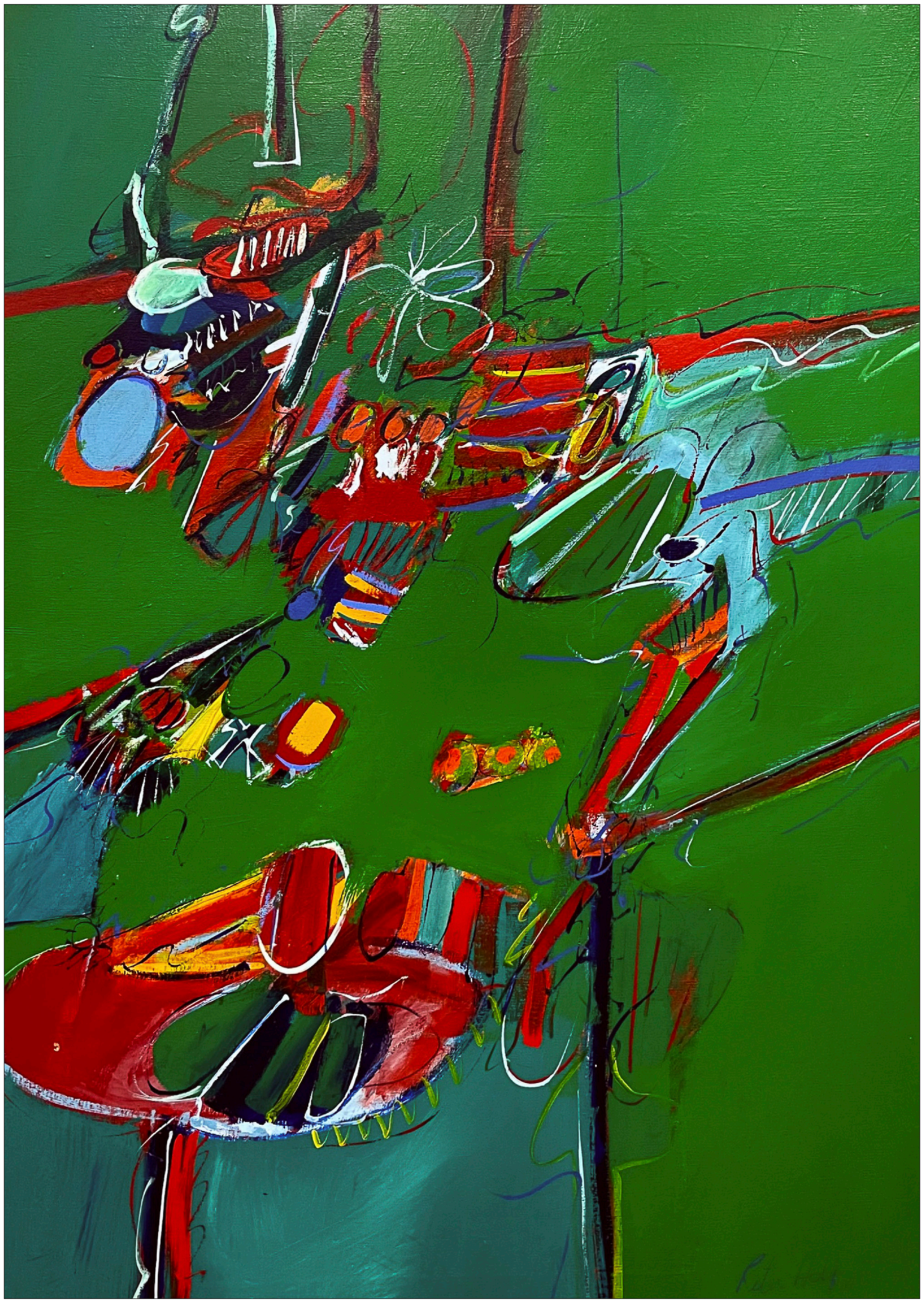
The elephant's argument is this: Bob Kutak, by quickly purchasing the best of my father's works from 1958 to 1983 for his private collection and law offices, kept my father from becoming more widely known, one who might have exhibited not only in Omaha and Waterloo but New York and L.A.

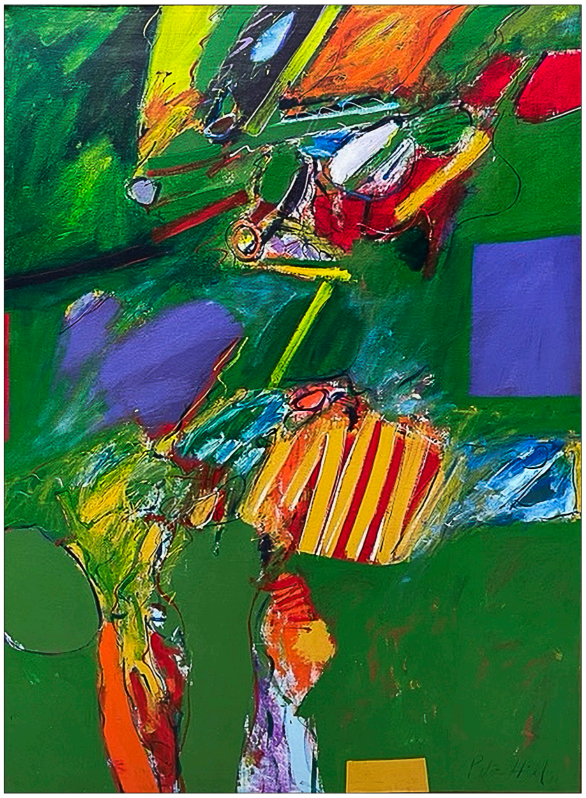
Well, maybe. But you can't prove a negative. And our elephant's assumption about "negative" relies on "positive" being public recognition and celebrity prices. Those are vain dreams. And just as there are hundreds of splendid actors who you've seen but can't name, there are thousands of committed creators who aren't famous but are superb artists. They work tirelessly to produce art of integrity because they want to do it and they enjoy it.

Viewed properly, Bob's patronage was positive and emancipating. It let my father paint what he wanted to paint. Bob trusted my father's vision, and that trust—and economic support—let my father follow that vision wherever it led. I believe that freedom is what mattered to him most in both his life and his art.

As for why this section is titled "Changing Styles," check out pages 149–151. Dad was restless, so new things were coming.

Jody Hill with Jim, Pete, and Lindsey in 1965. In the background: *The Sarders*.



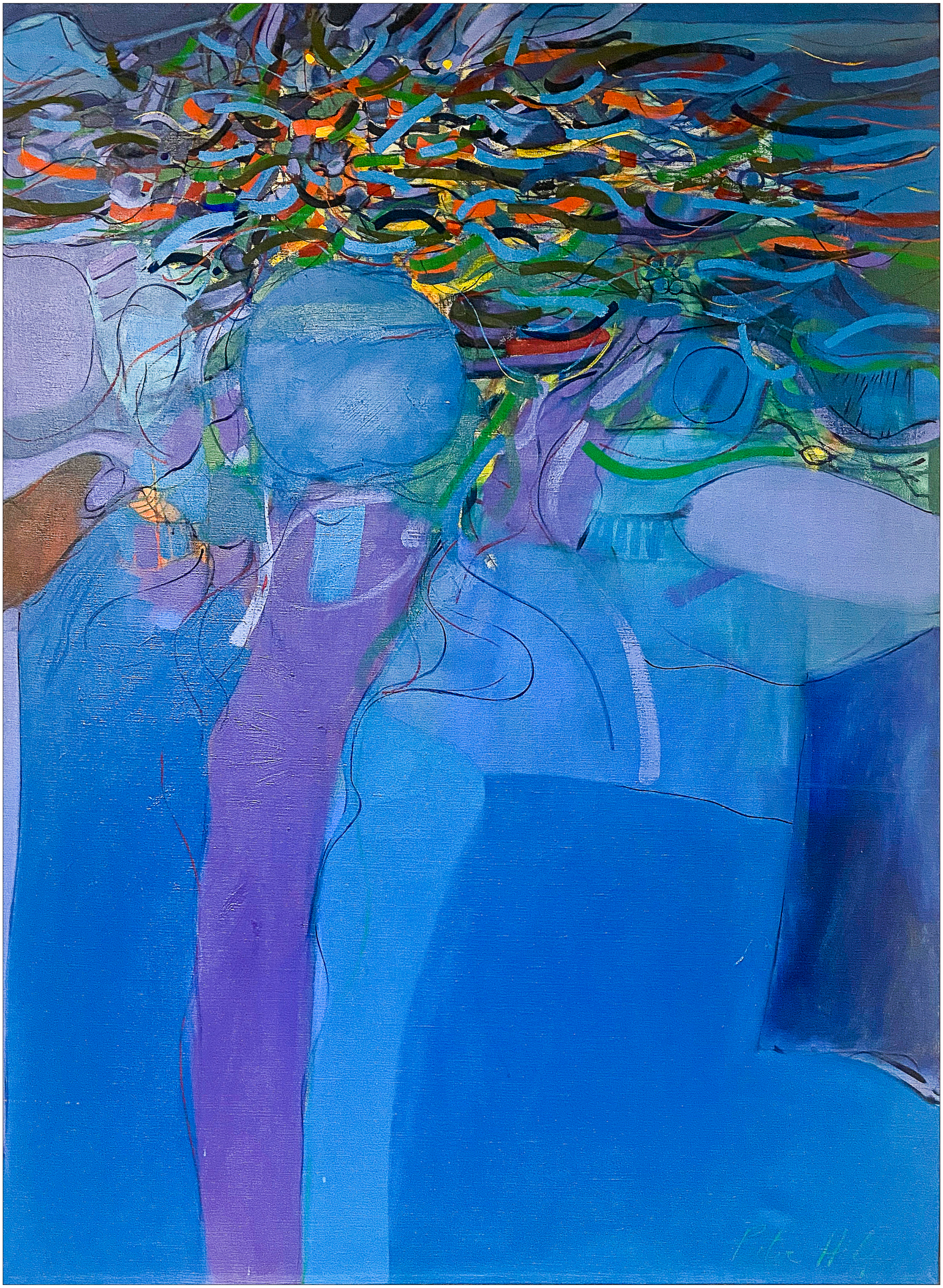


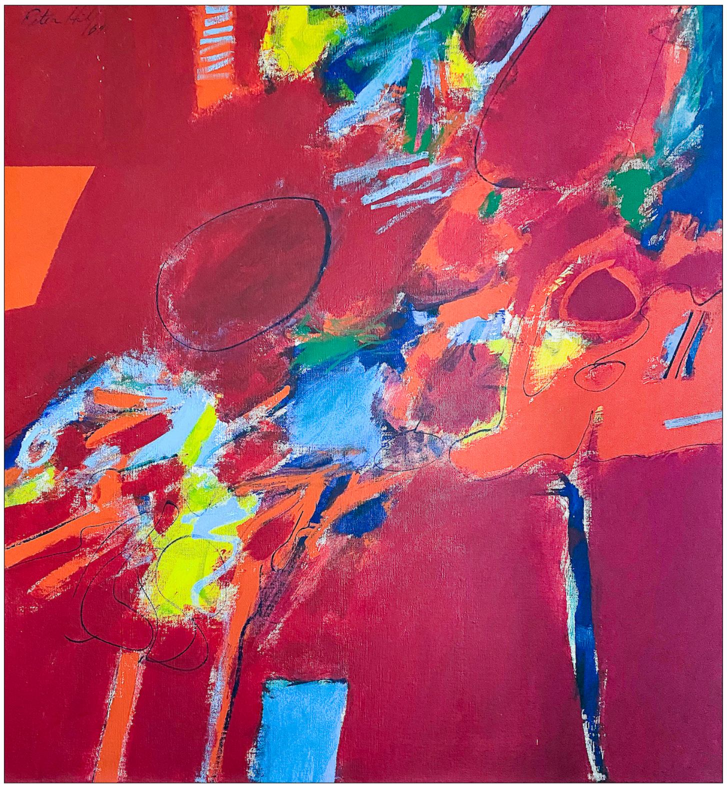
Green Interiors 1 and 2 (above)

Both works: 1964. Acrylic on canvas, 55.5 x 39.5 in.
Collections of Doane University and Albion College.

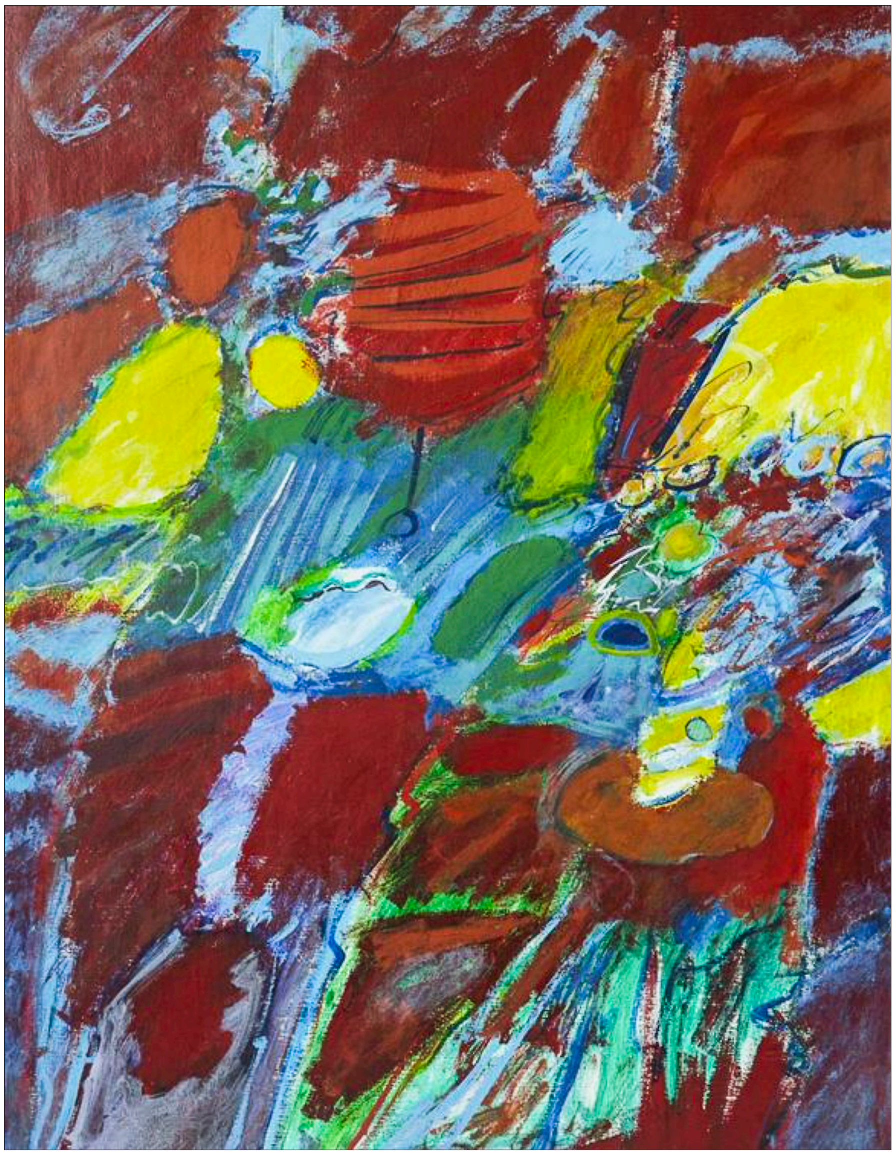
Telemann Tree (opposite)

1964. Acrylic on canvas, 55 x 40 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

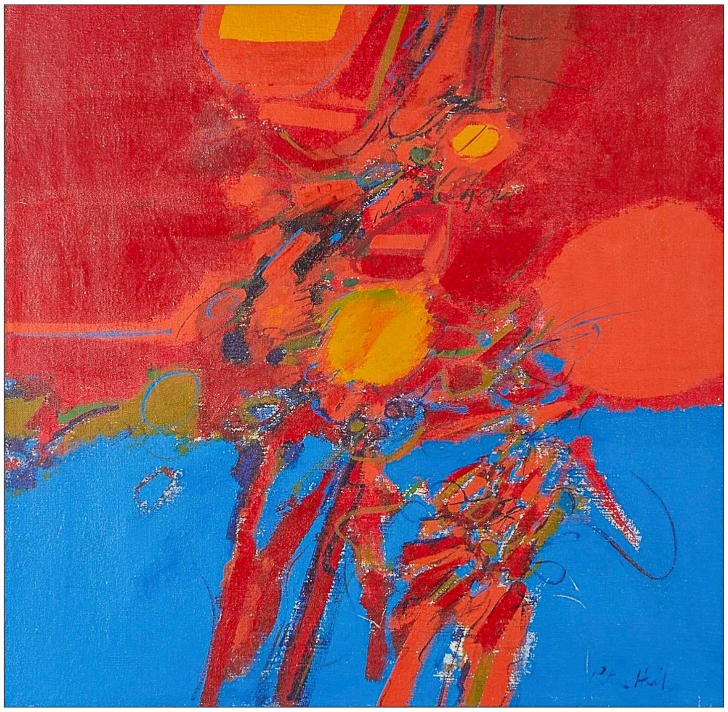




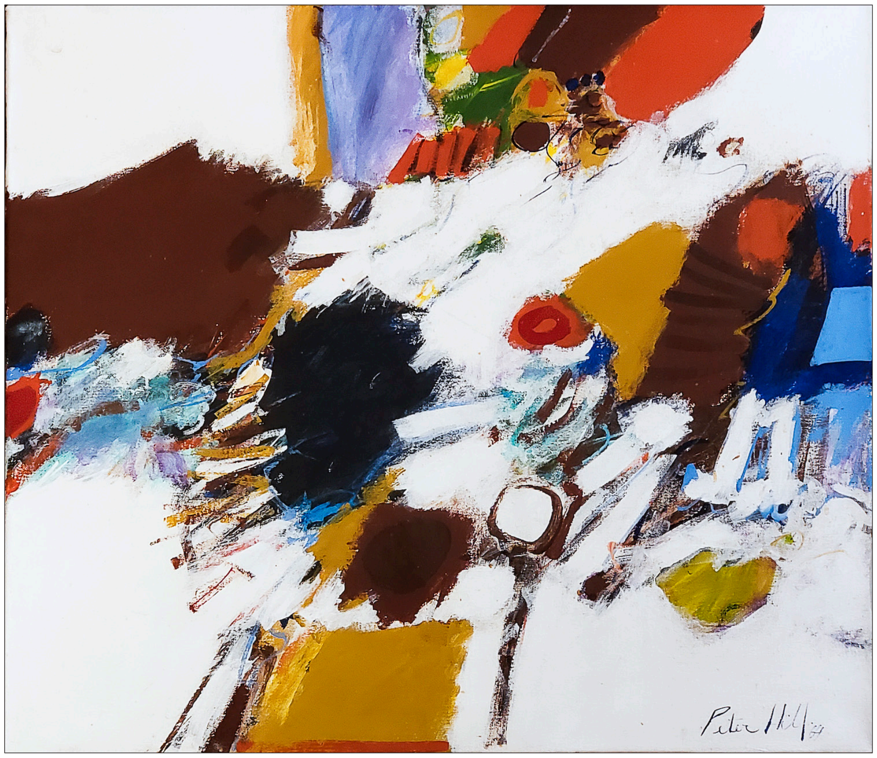
Untitled, 1964. Acrylic on canvas, 30 x 30 in.
Collection of Marilyn Rock.



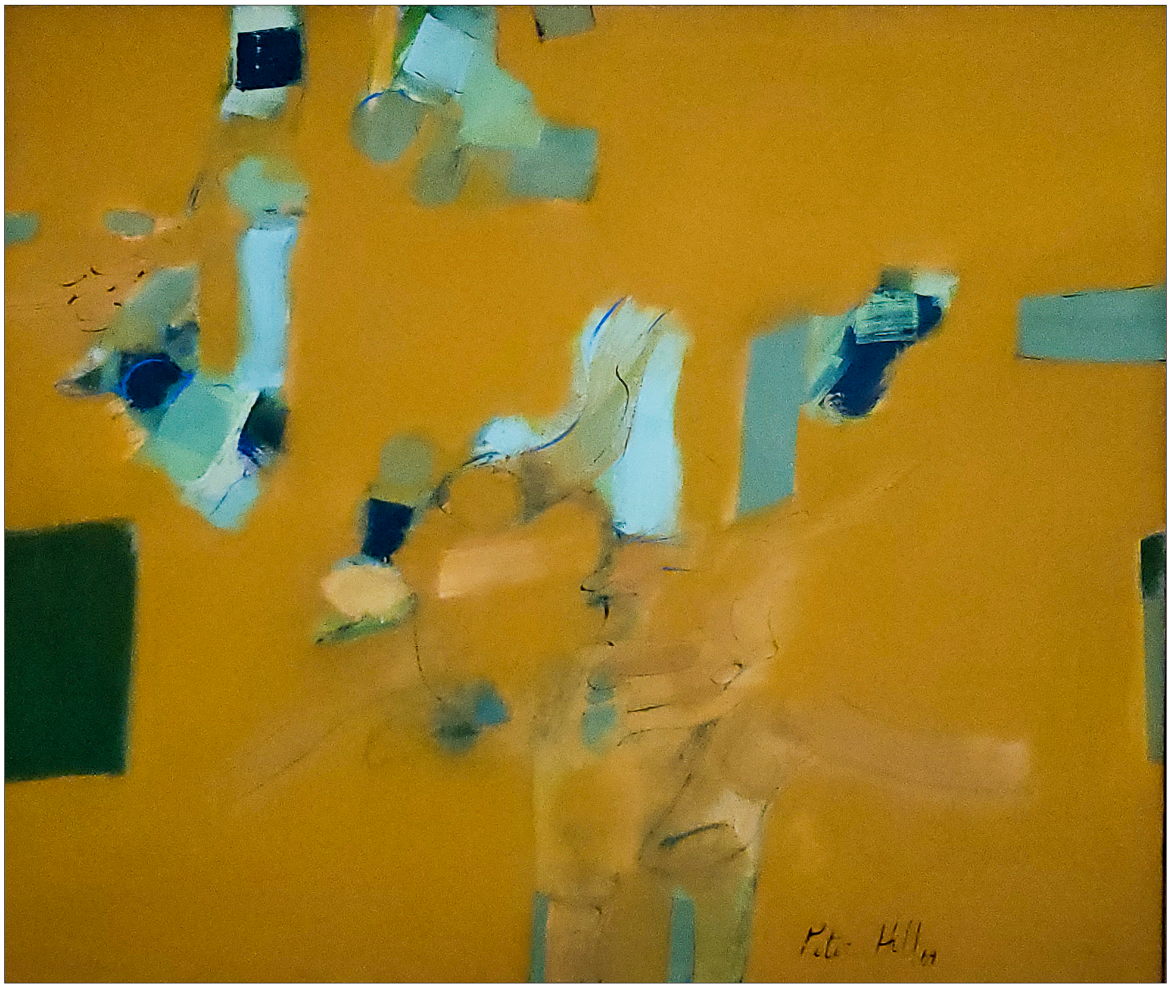
Summer Day, 1964.
Acrylic on canvas, 53.25 x 42 in.



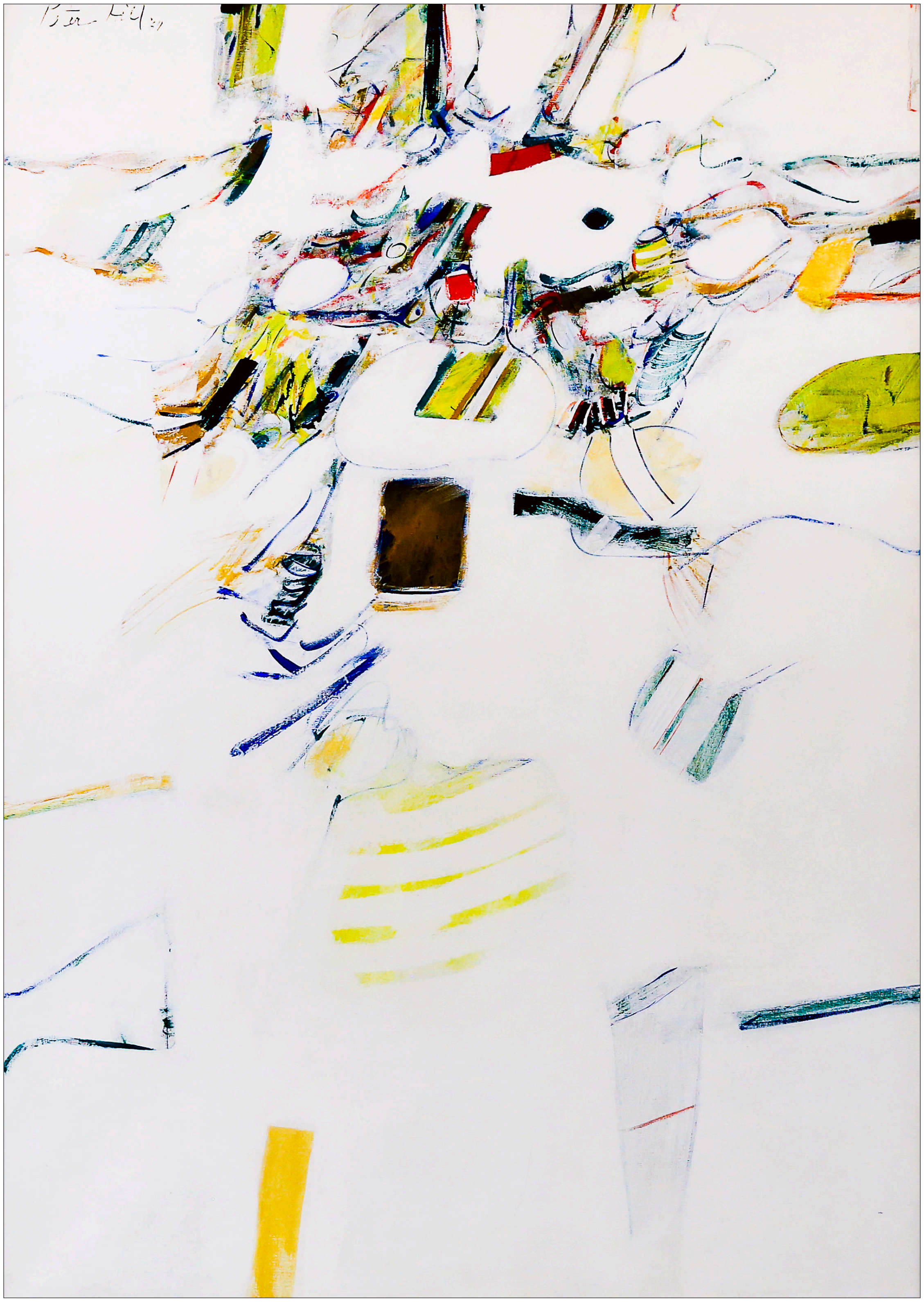
Warrior I, 1964. Acrylic on canvas, 27 x 27.25 in.



Untitled, 1964.
Acrylic on canvas, 26 x 30 in.
Collection of Rick and Connie Spellman.
Photograph by Alec Paul.

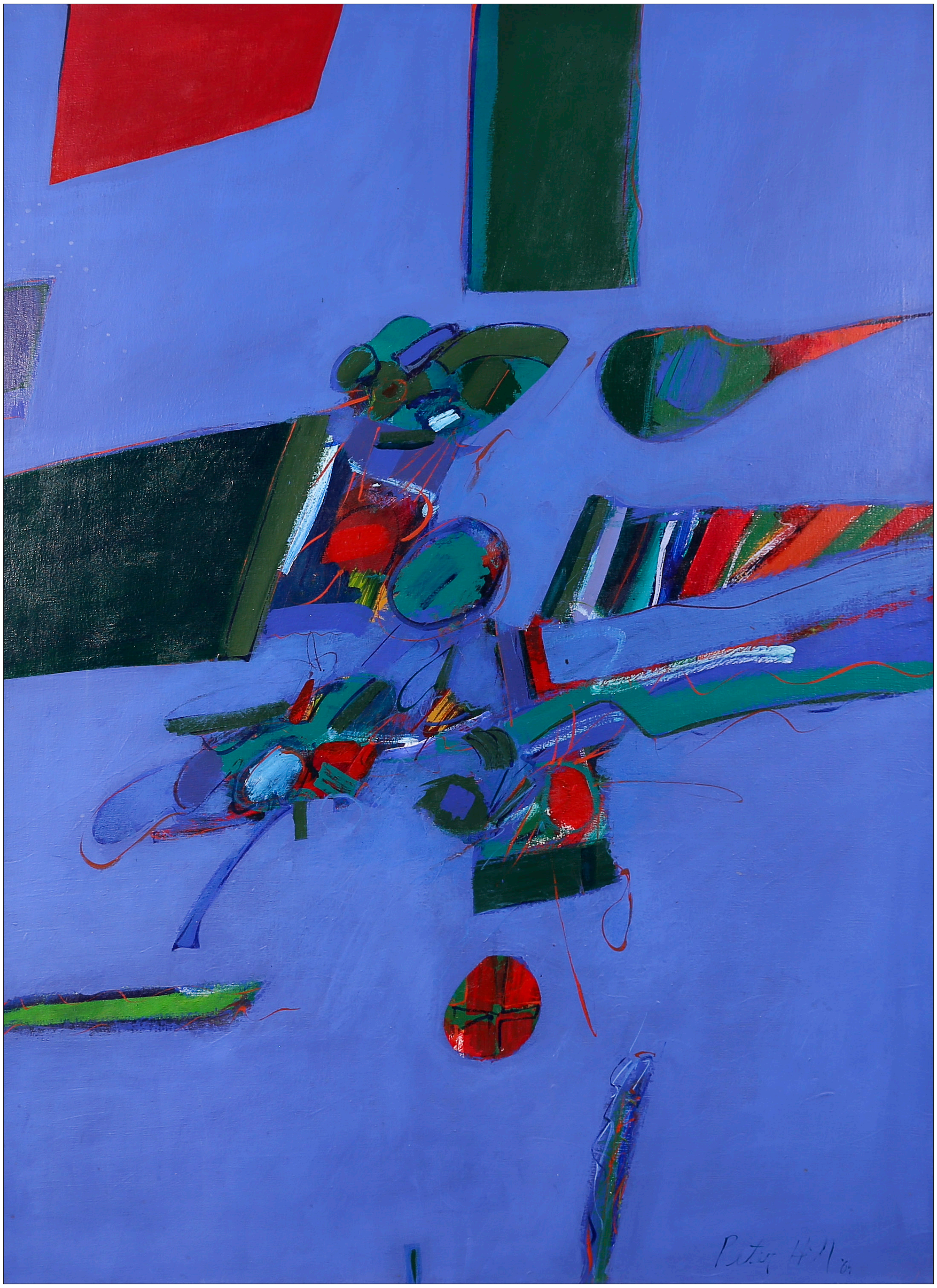


The Egyptian, 1964. Oil on canvas, 37 x 43.5 in.
Collection of John and Barbara Musselman. Photograph by Alec Paul.



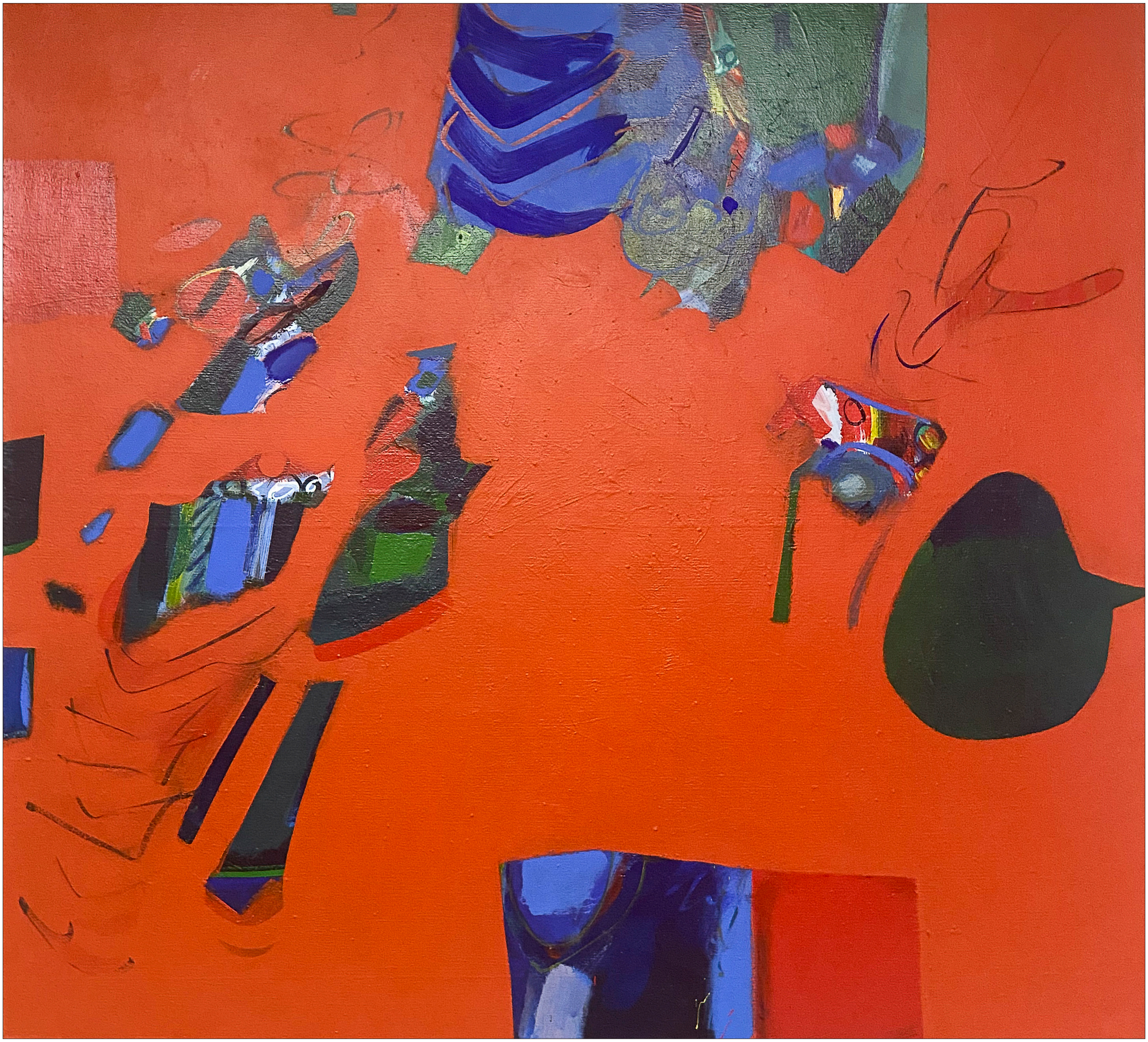
Pythian

1964. Acrylic on canvas, 56 x 40 in. Exhibited at the Detroit Institute of Arts in 1964; represented Nebraska in the "Fifty Artists from Fifty States" traveling exhibition, 1965–68. Collection of Kutak Rock.



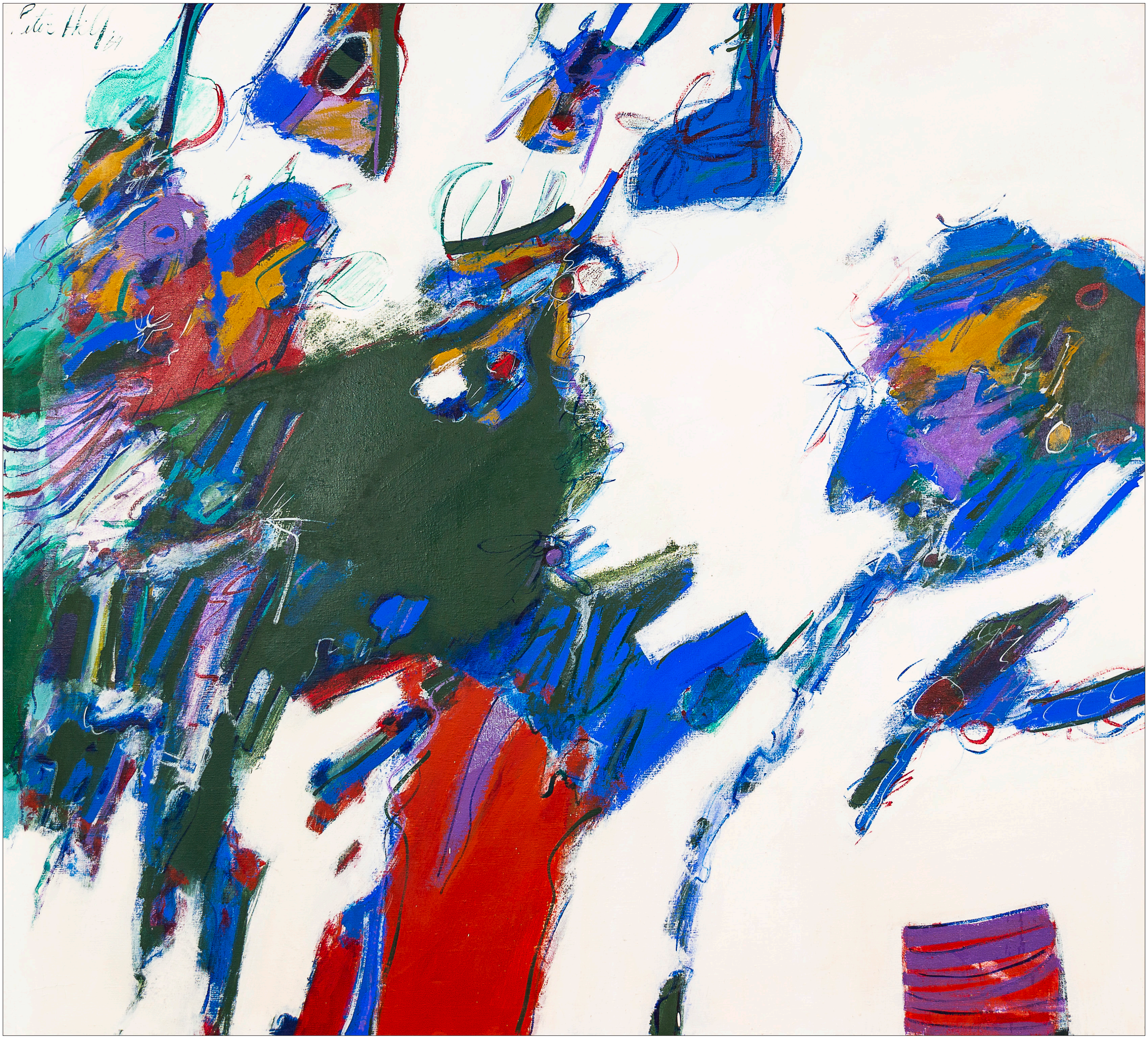
Tydeus

1964. Acrylic on canvas, 54 x 40 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



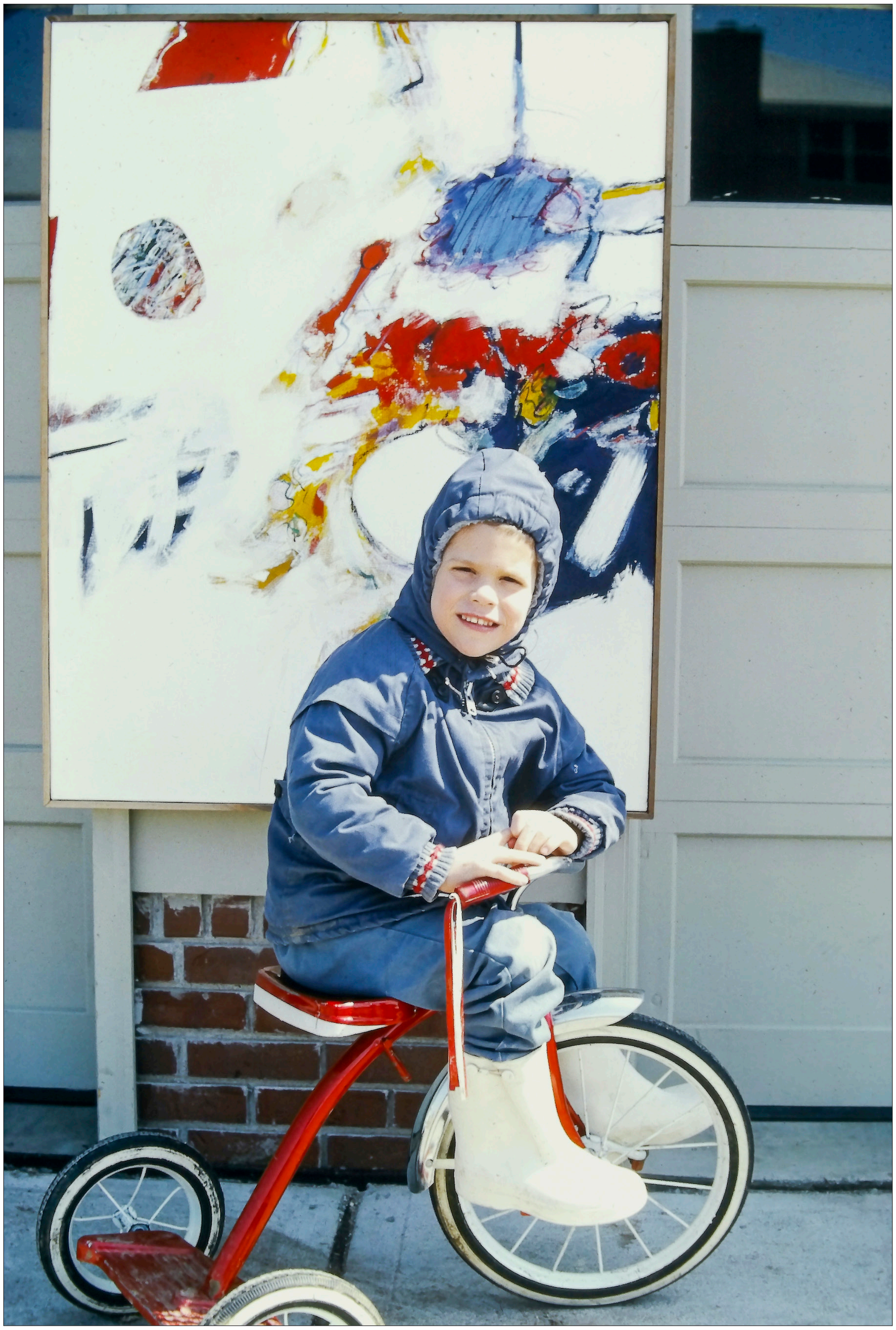
Calabrian Part

1964. Acrylic on canvas.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



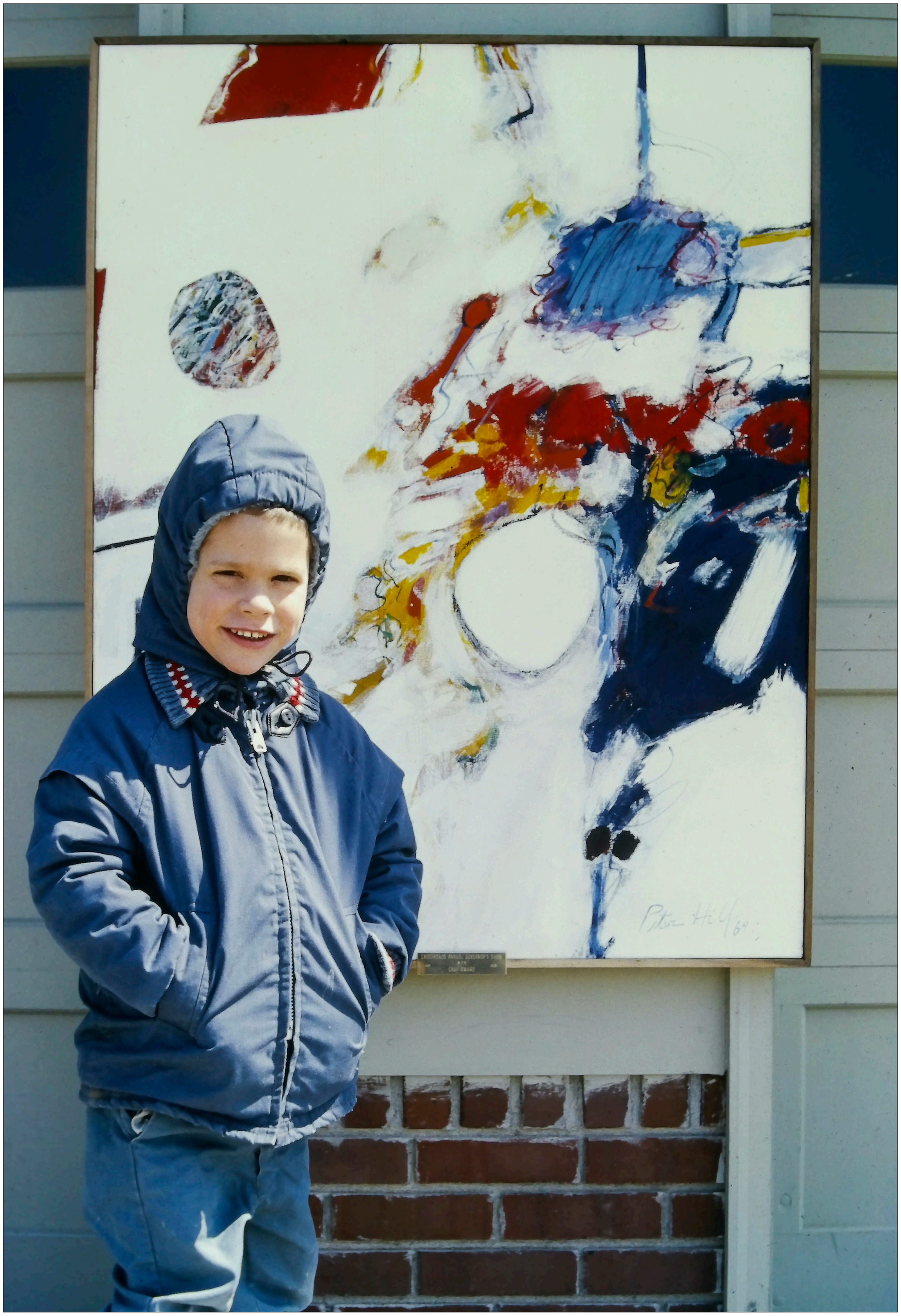
The Sarders

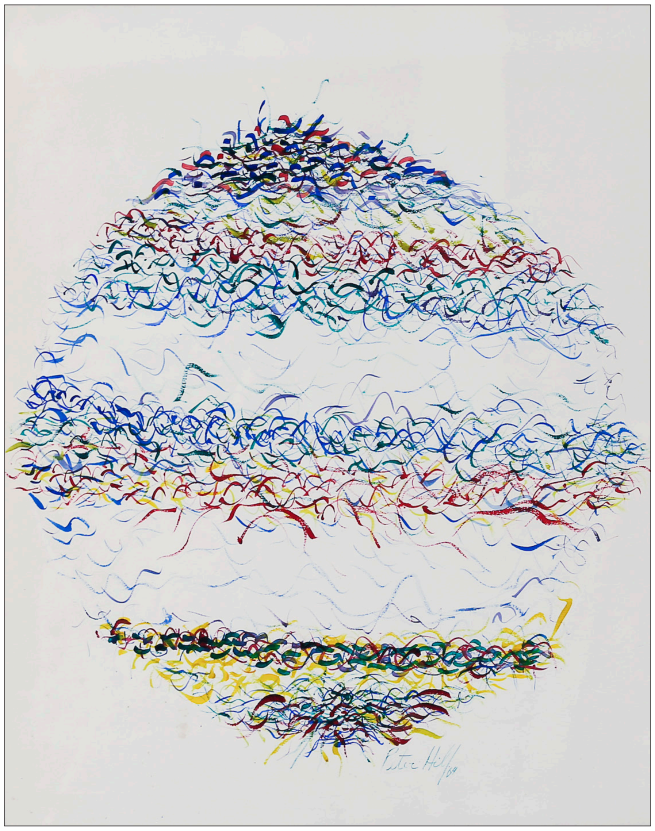
1964. Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 72 in.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.



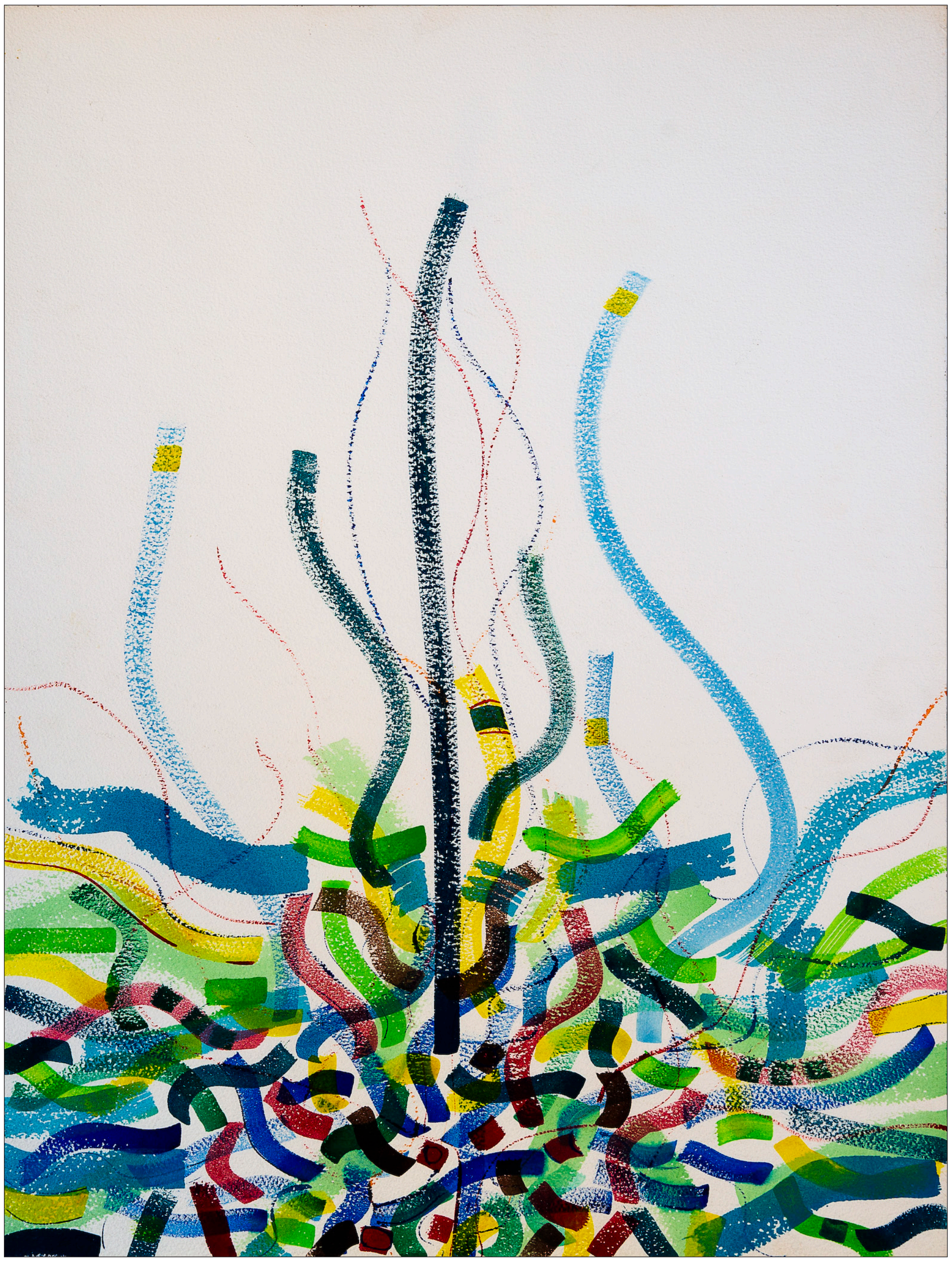
Myrine (above and opposite)

Photographed with James (Jim) Hill, the artist's eldest son.
1964 or 1965. Acrylic on canvas, 42 x 33 in.

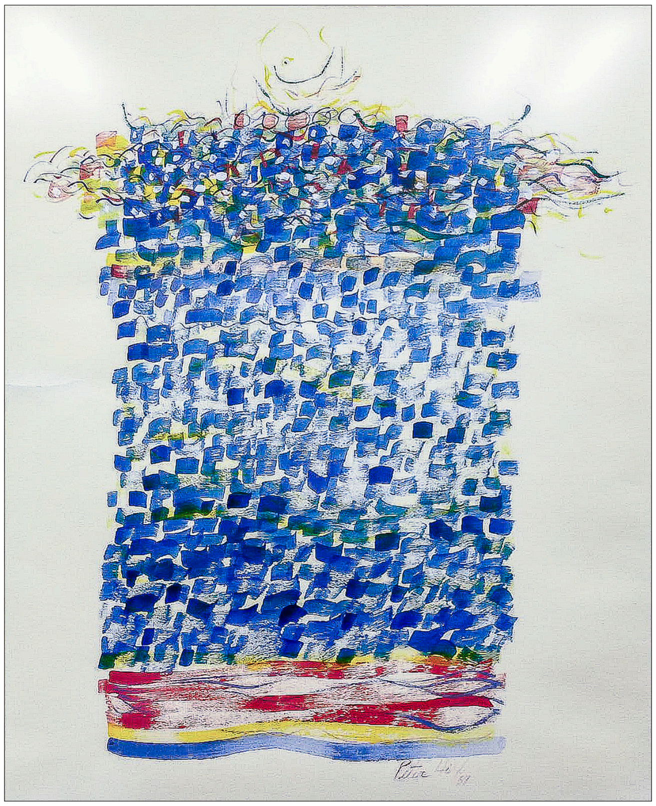




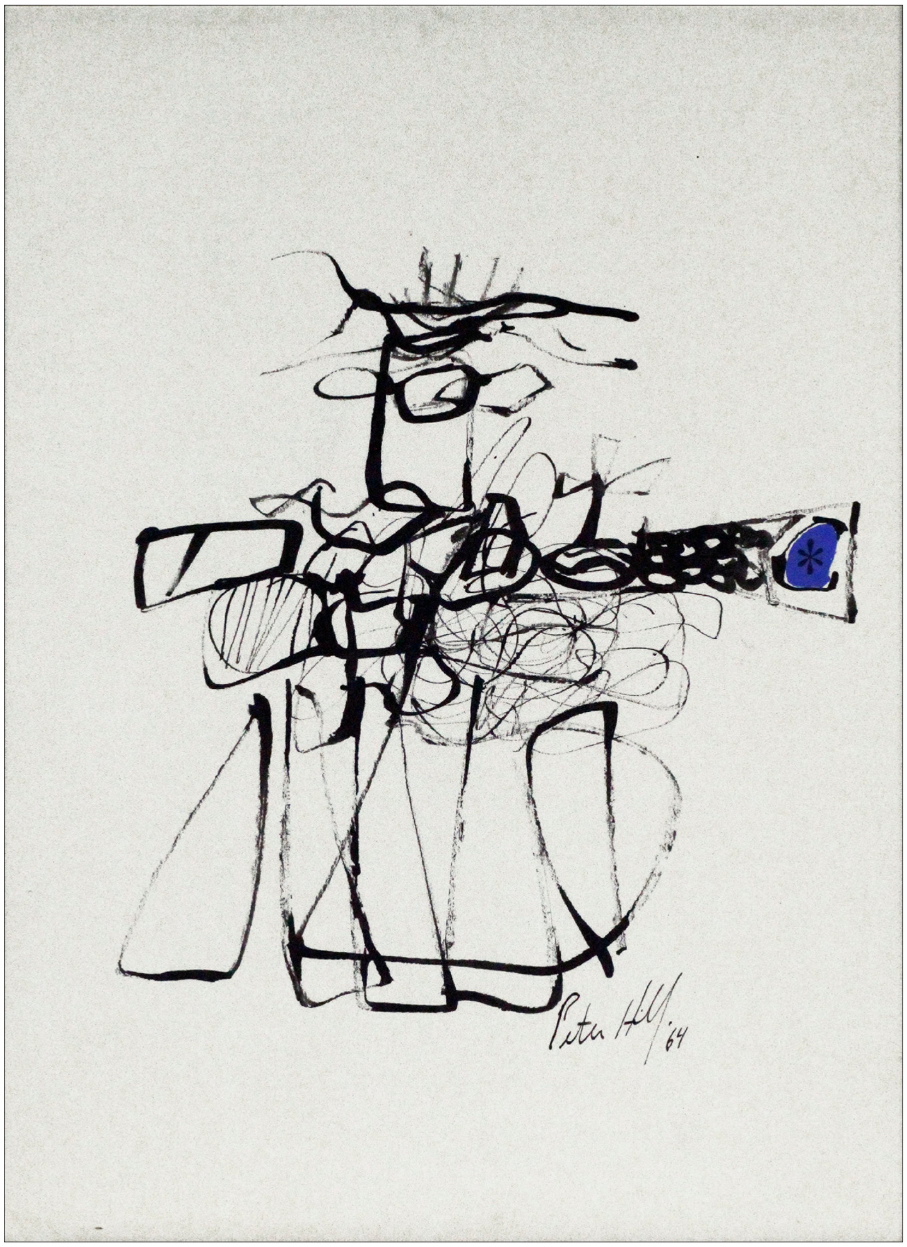
Untitled, 1964. Ink on paper, 26 x 21.5 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



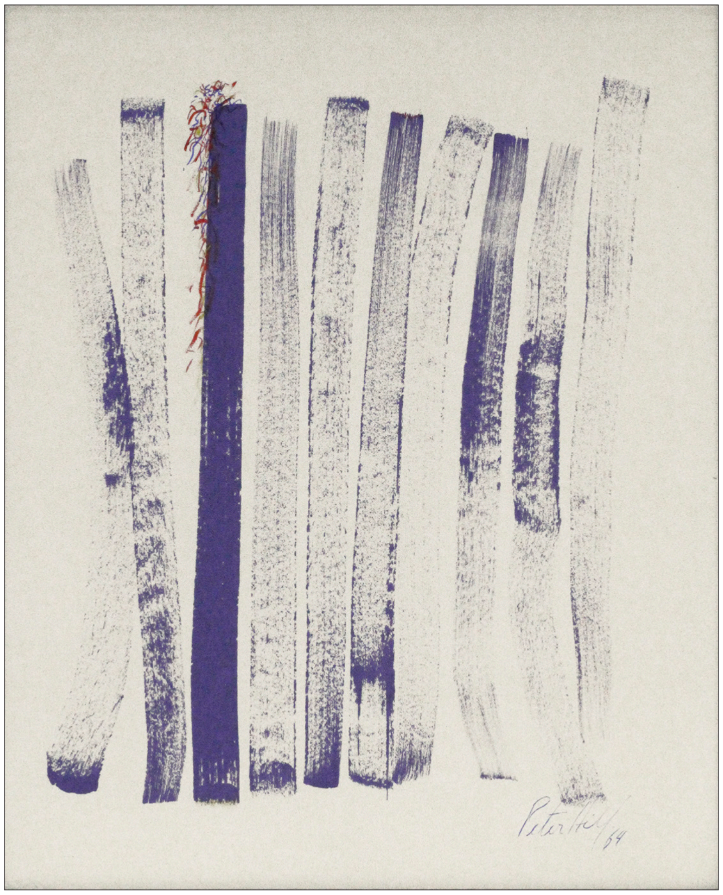
Untitled, 1964. Ink on paper, 24 x 18 in.
Collection of Alice and Austen Ulmer.



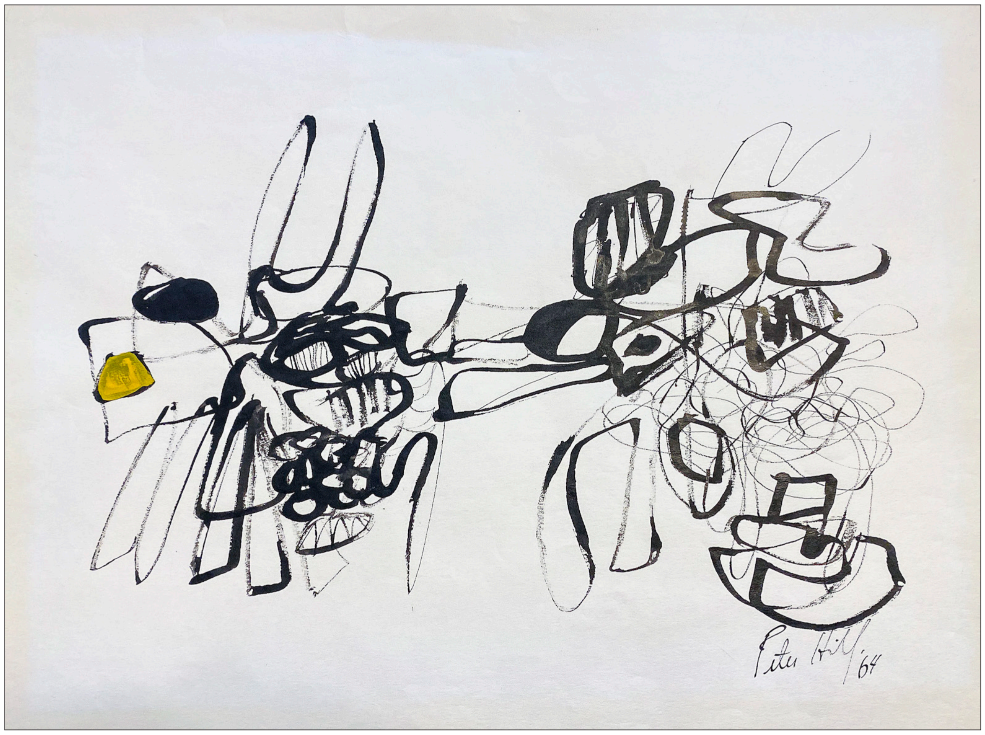
Untitled, 1964. Ink on paper.
Collection of Criss Library, UNO.


Peter Hill '64

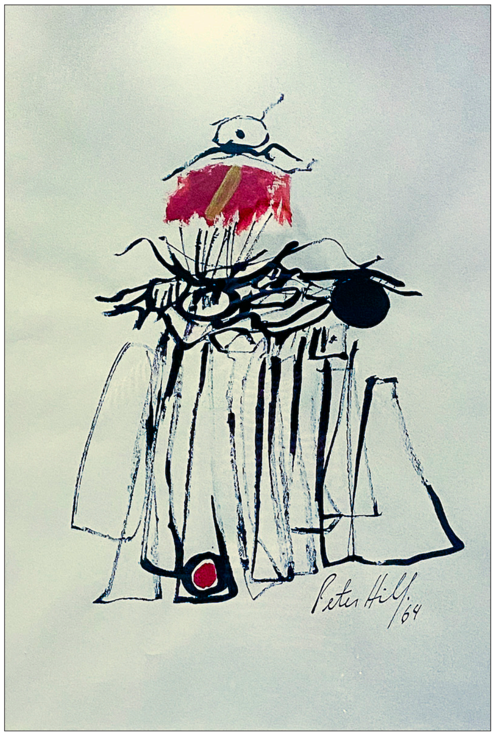
Untitled, 1964. Ink on paper, 22 x 16.5 in. Collection of Slater Sousley.


Peter Hill '64

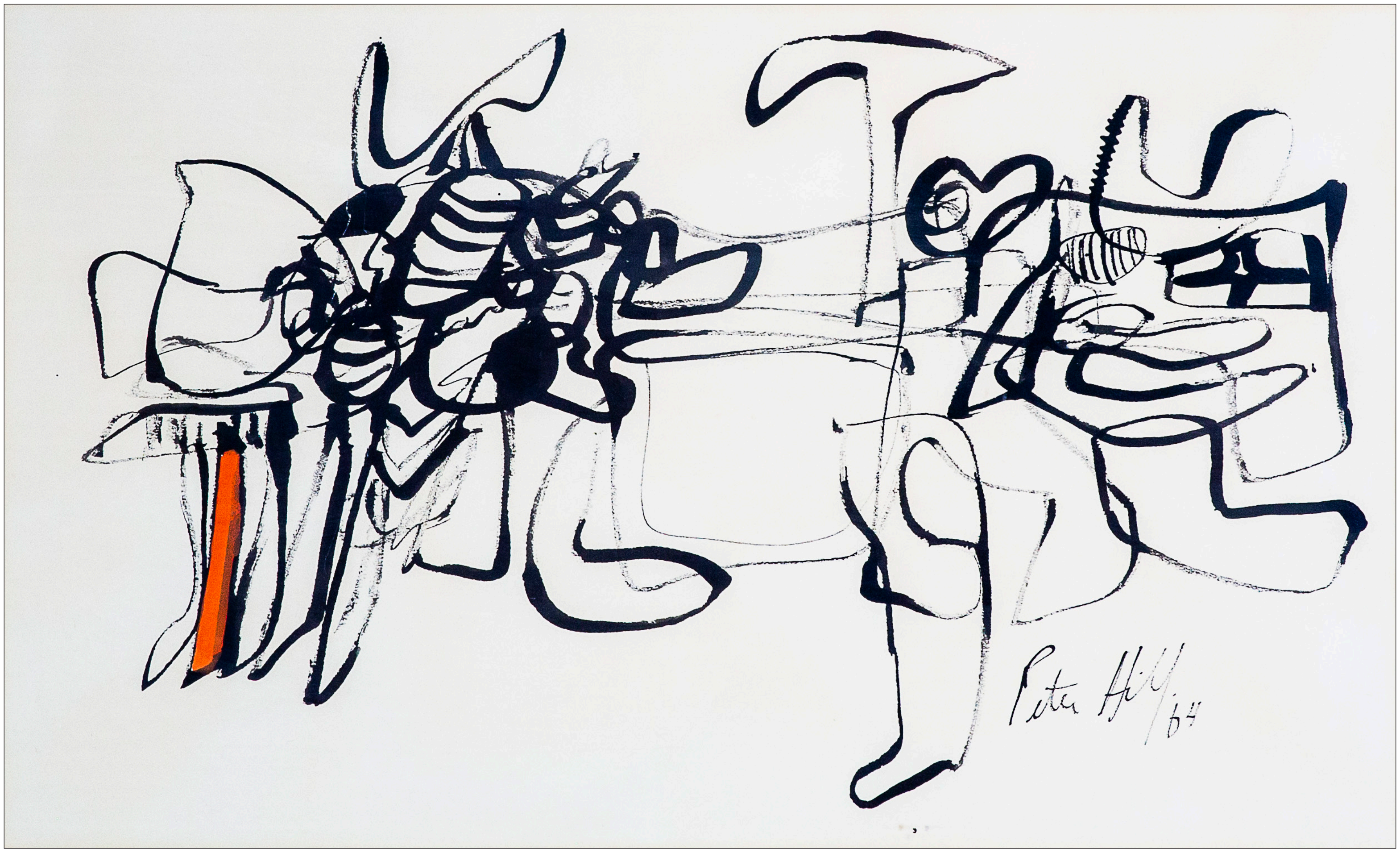
Untitled, 1964. Ink and gouache on paper, 15.5 x 12.5 in. Collection of Lynn Turner Sousley.



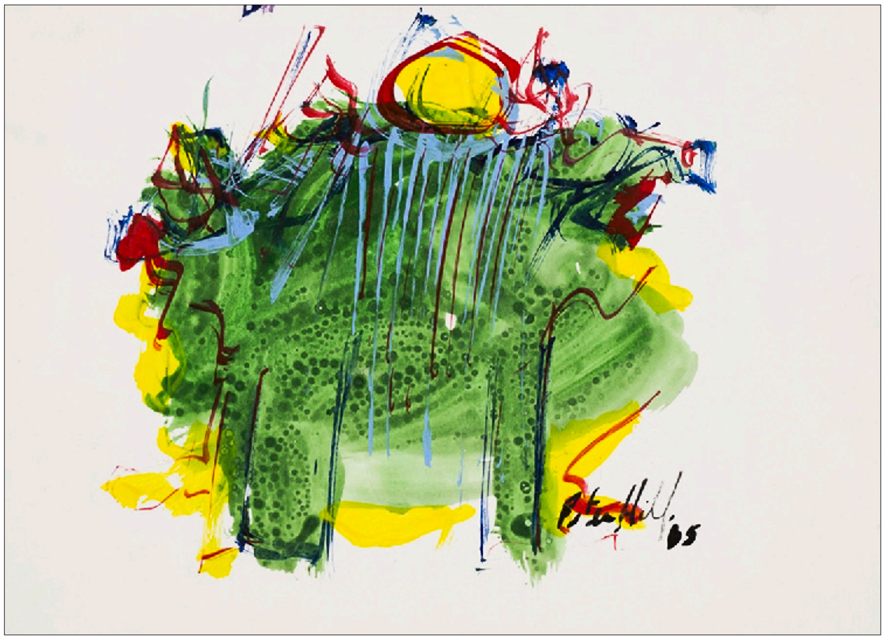
Untitled, 1964. Ink and gouache on paper, 17.5 x 22 in.
Collection of Gina and Terry Mitchell.



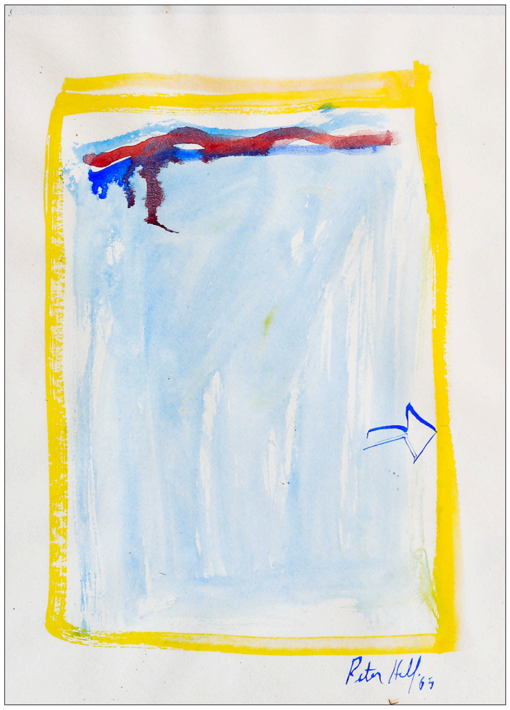
Untitled, 1964. Ink and gouache.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



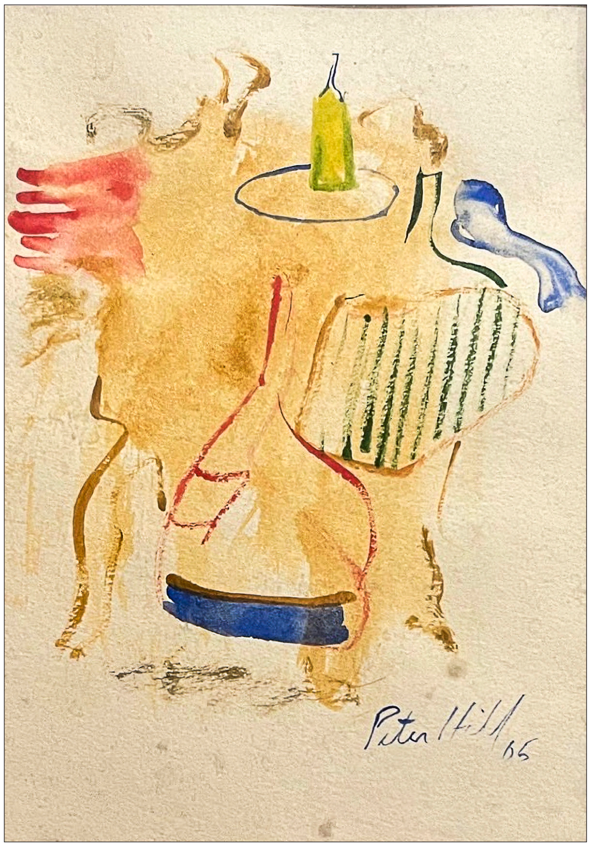
Untitled, 1964. Ink and gouache on paper. Collection of Eddie Wintroub.



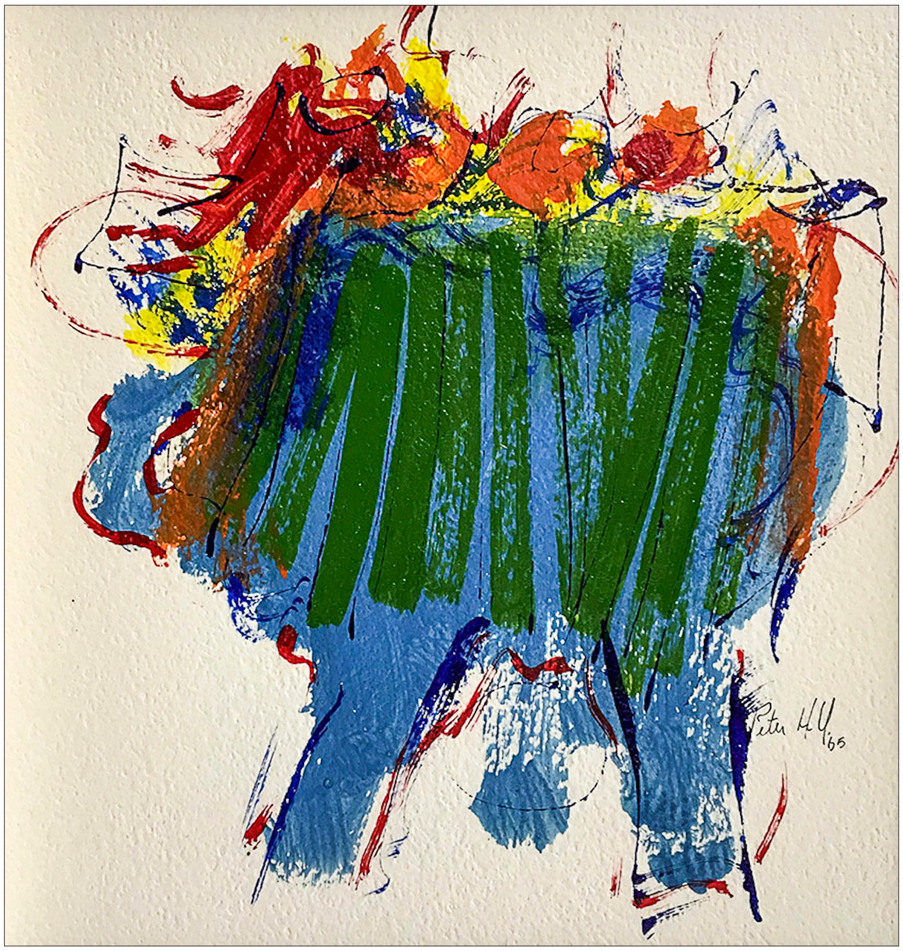
Small Study, 1965. Gouache on paper, 4.875 x 6.375 in.
Collection of the Sheldon Museum of Art.



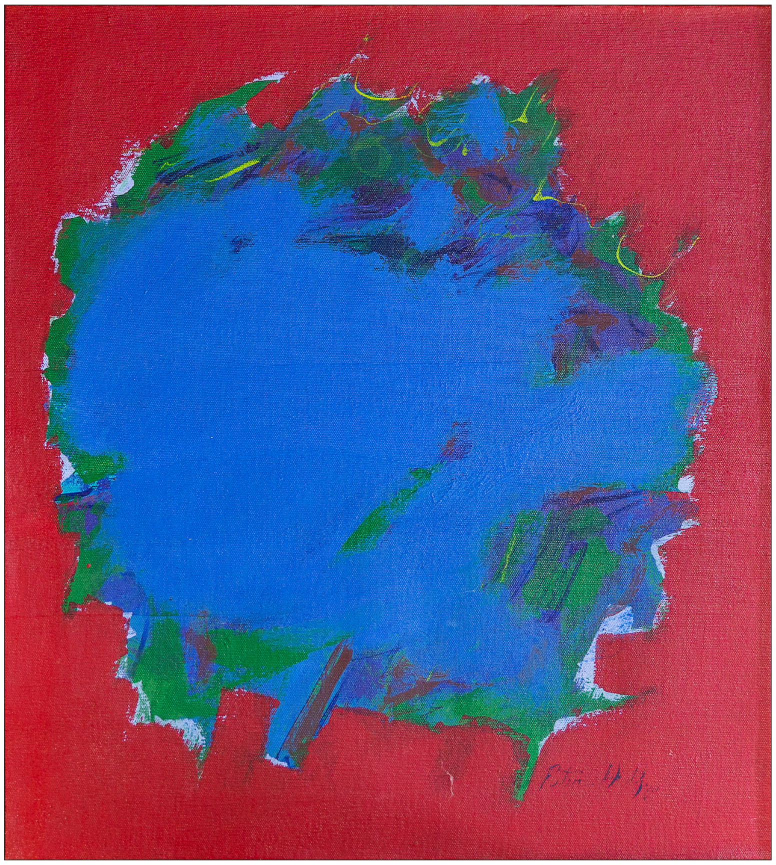
Arrow No. 2, 1965. Watercolor.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.



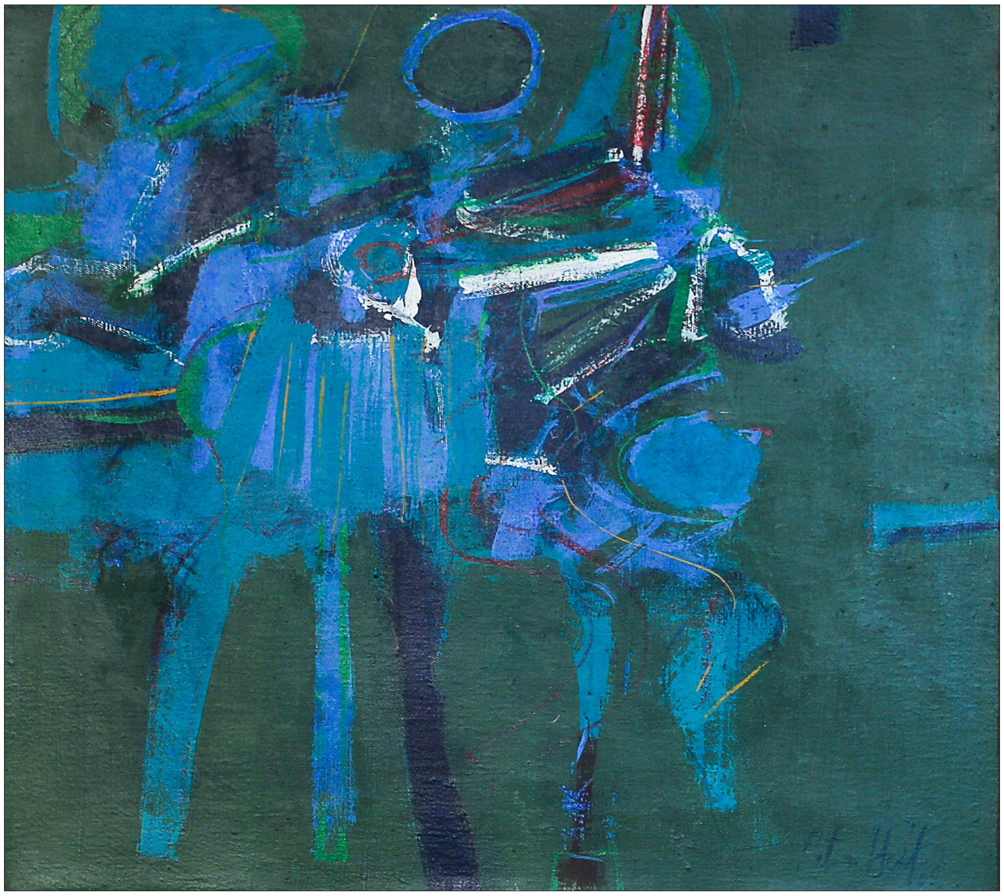
Untitled, 1965. Watercolor.
Collection of Kristin and Greg Janisch.

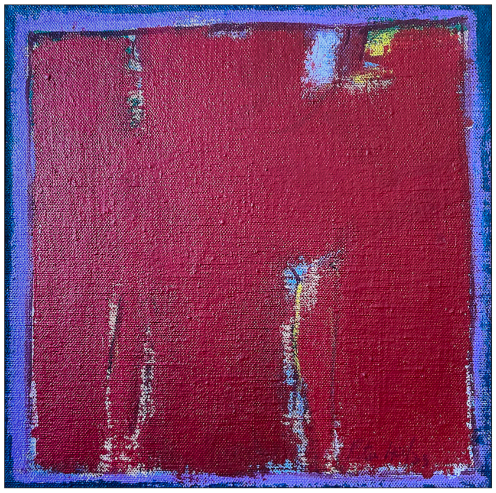


Small Study, 1965. Acrylic on matboard, 11 x 10.5 in.
Collection of the Museum of Nebraska Art.



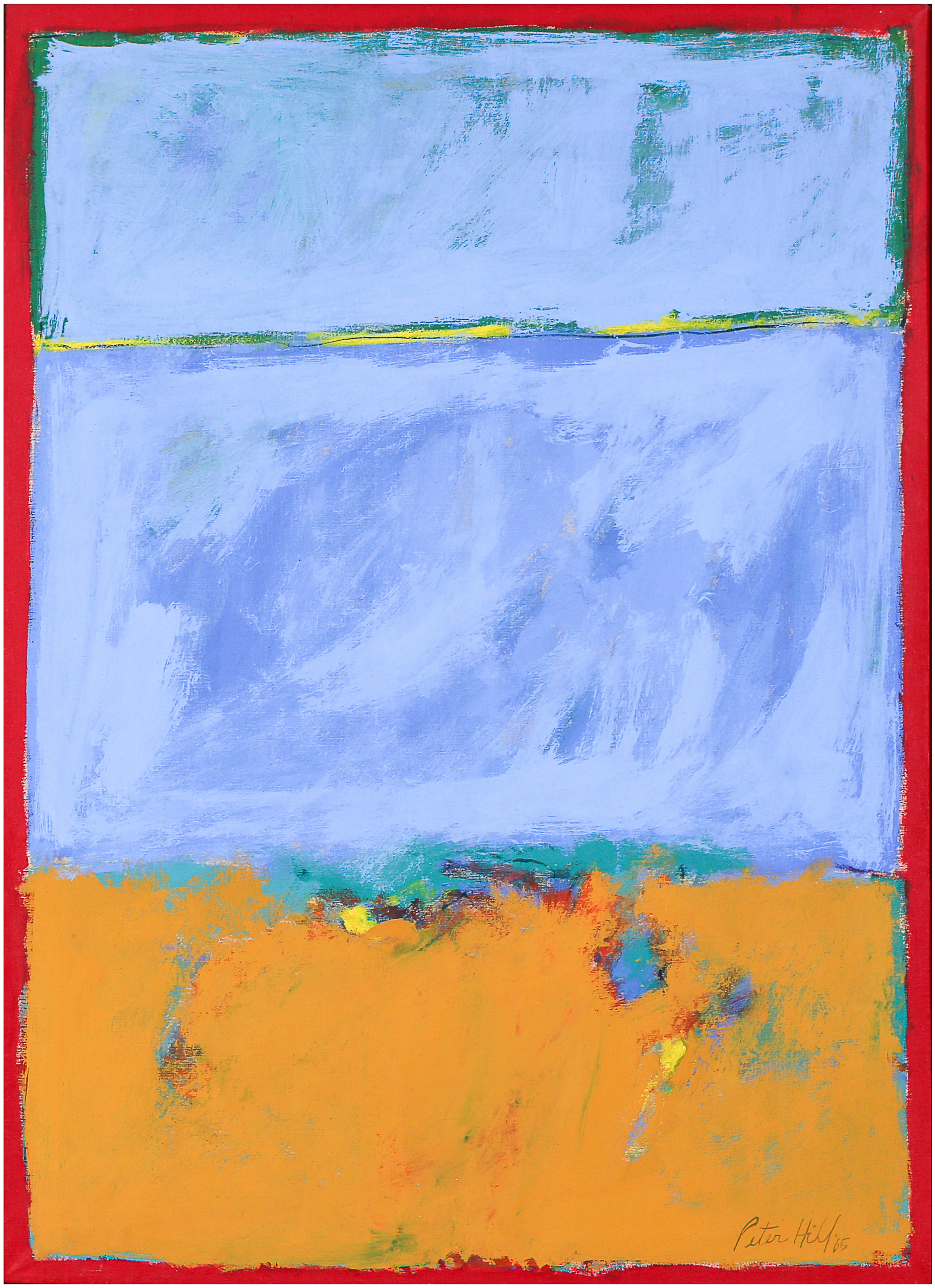
Beginning, 1964.
Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 18 in.
Collection of Eddie Wintroub.





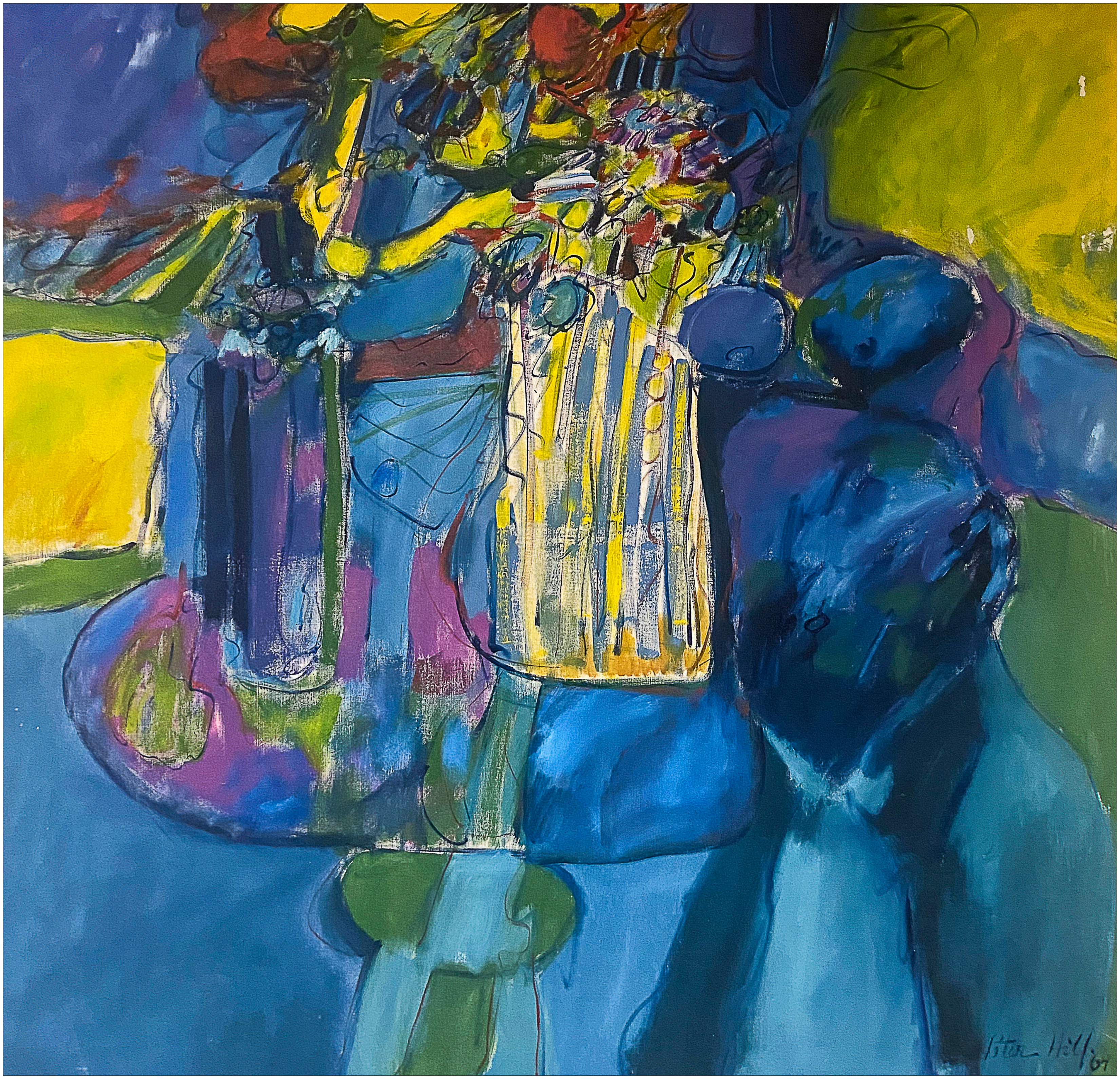
Untitled, 1965. Acrylic, 11 x 11 in.
Collection of Marilyn Rock.

Untitled, 1965. Acrylic on canvas, 21 x 19 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



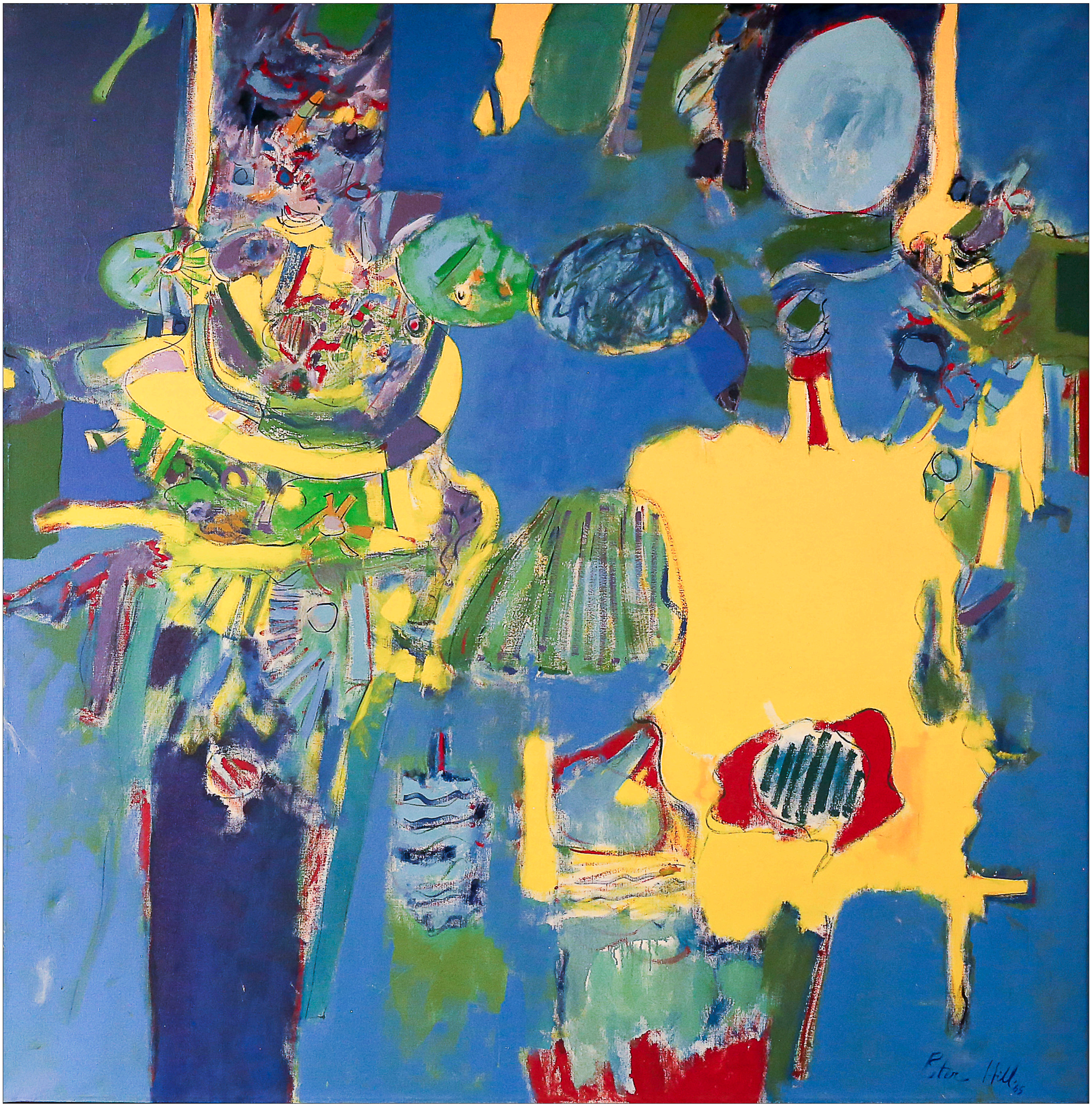
Window in Spring

1965. Acrylic on canvas, 37 x 27 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



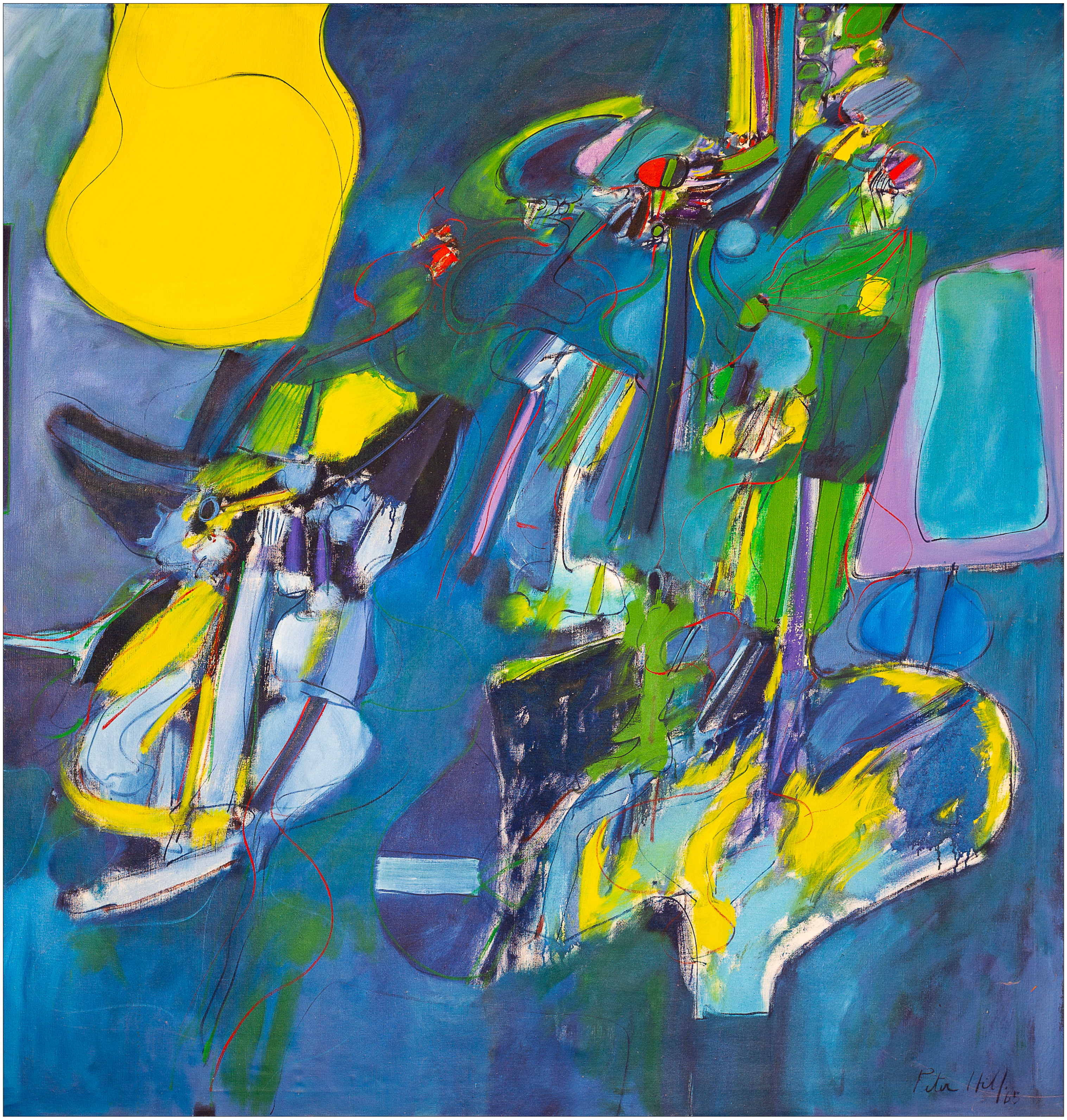
Primavera

1964. Oil on canvas, 60 x 58 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



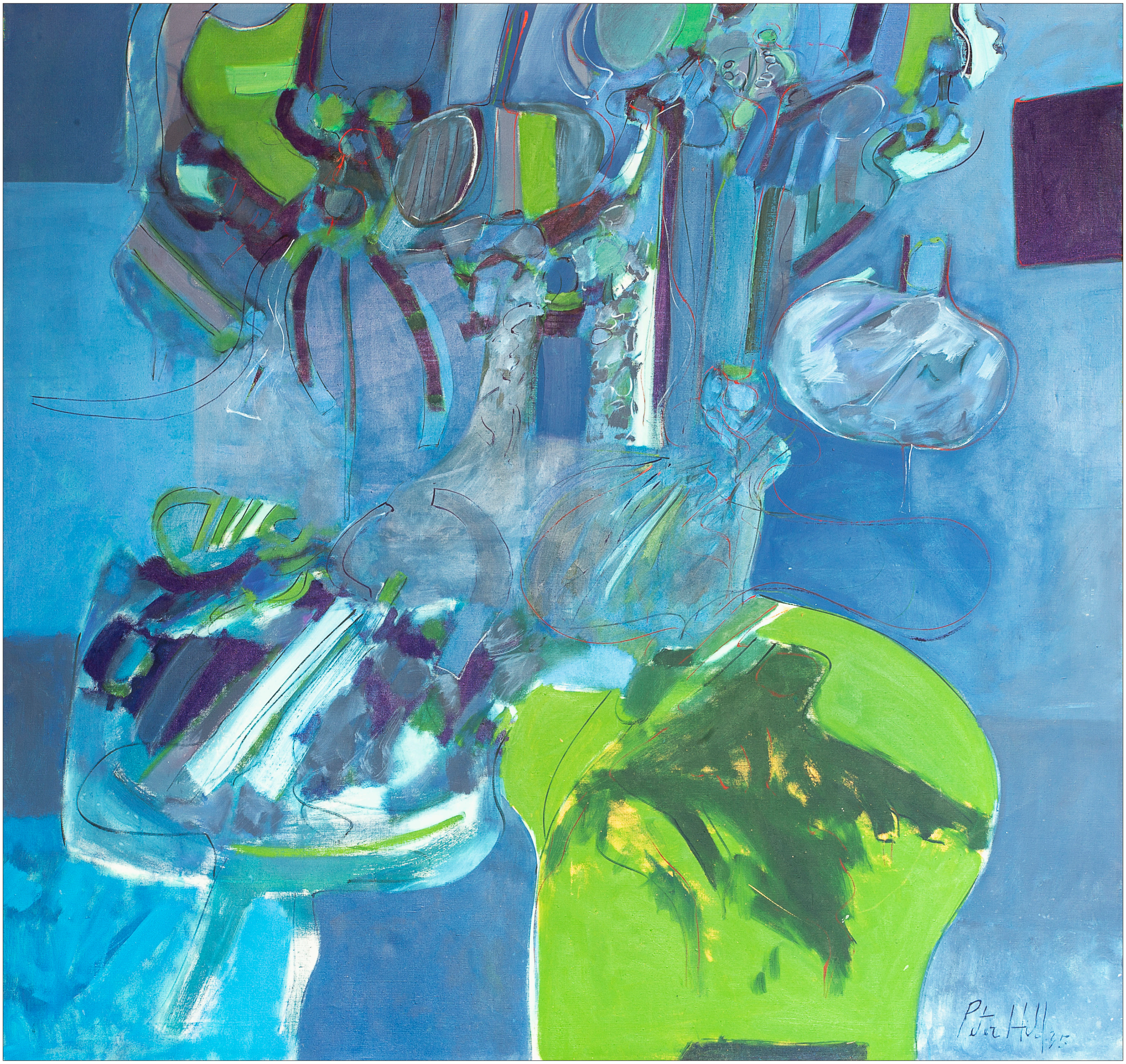
Ophidia

1965. Oil on canvas.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



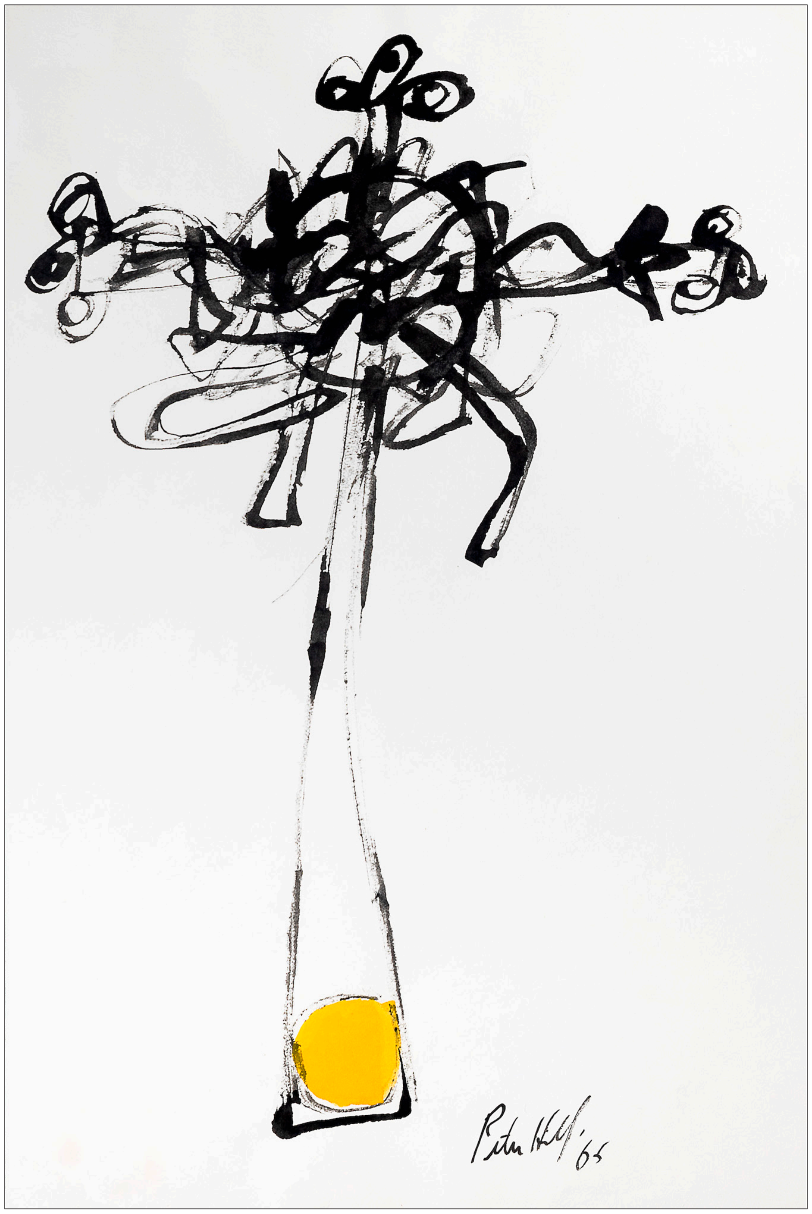
Blue Garden

1965. Oil on canvas, 66 x 61 in.
Collection of Eddie Wintroub.

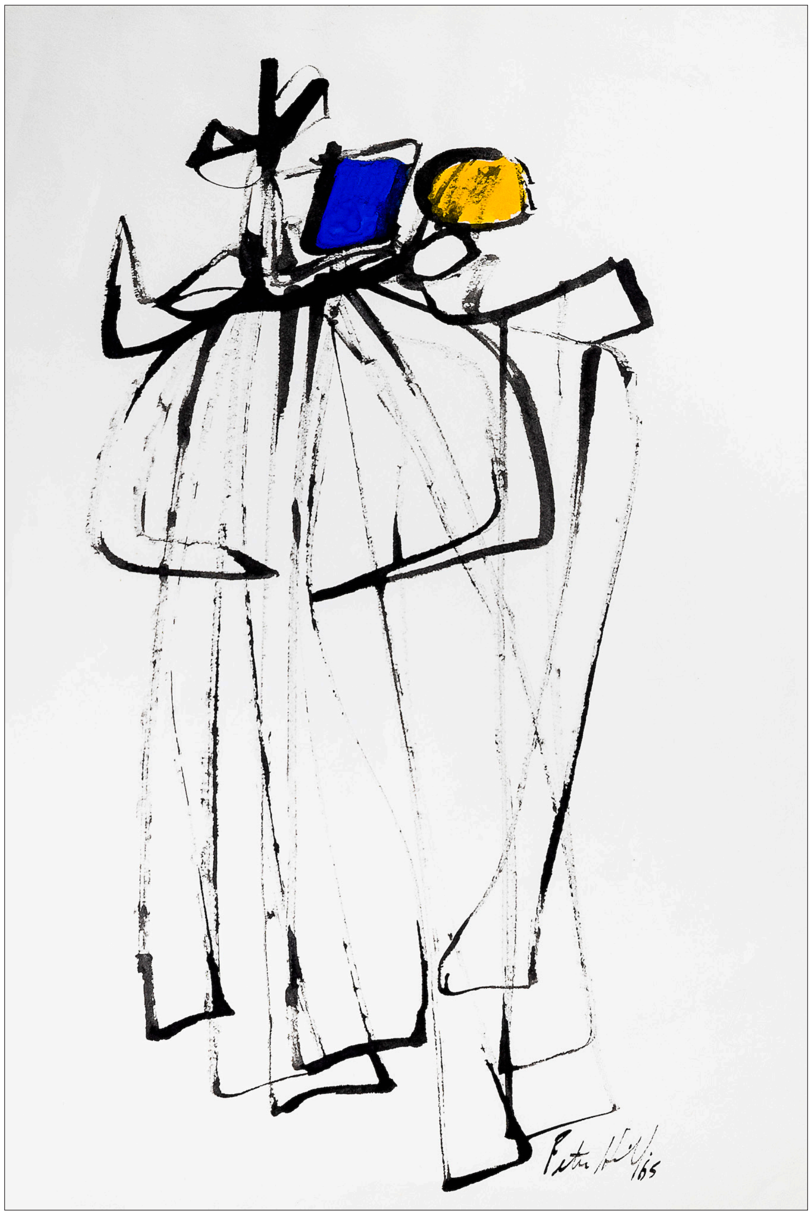


Untitled

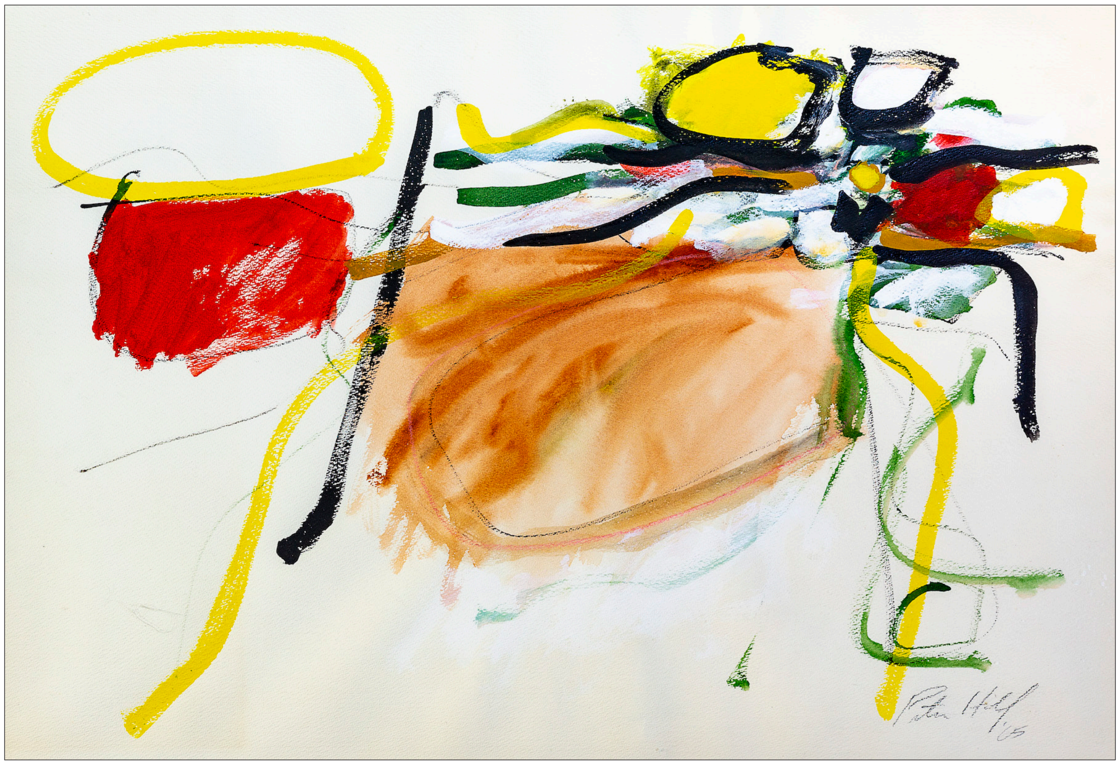
1965. Oil on canvas, 59.25 x 62.25 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman. Canada.



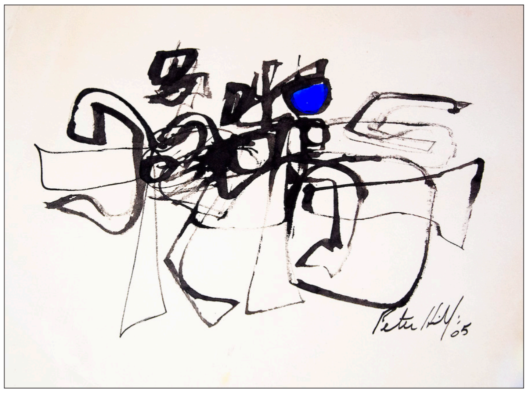
Untitled, 1965. Ink and acrylic on paper.
Collection of Stefanie Huff.



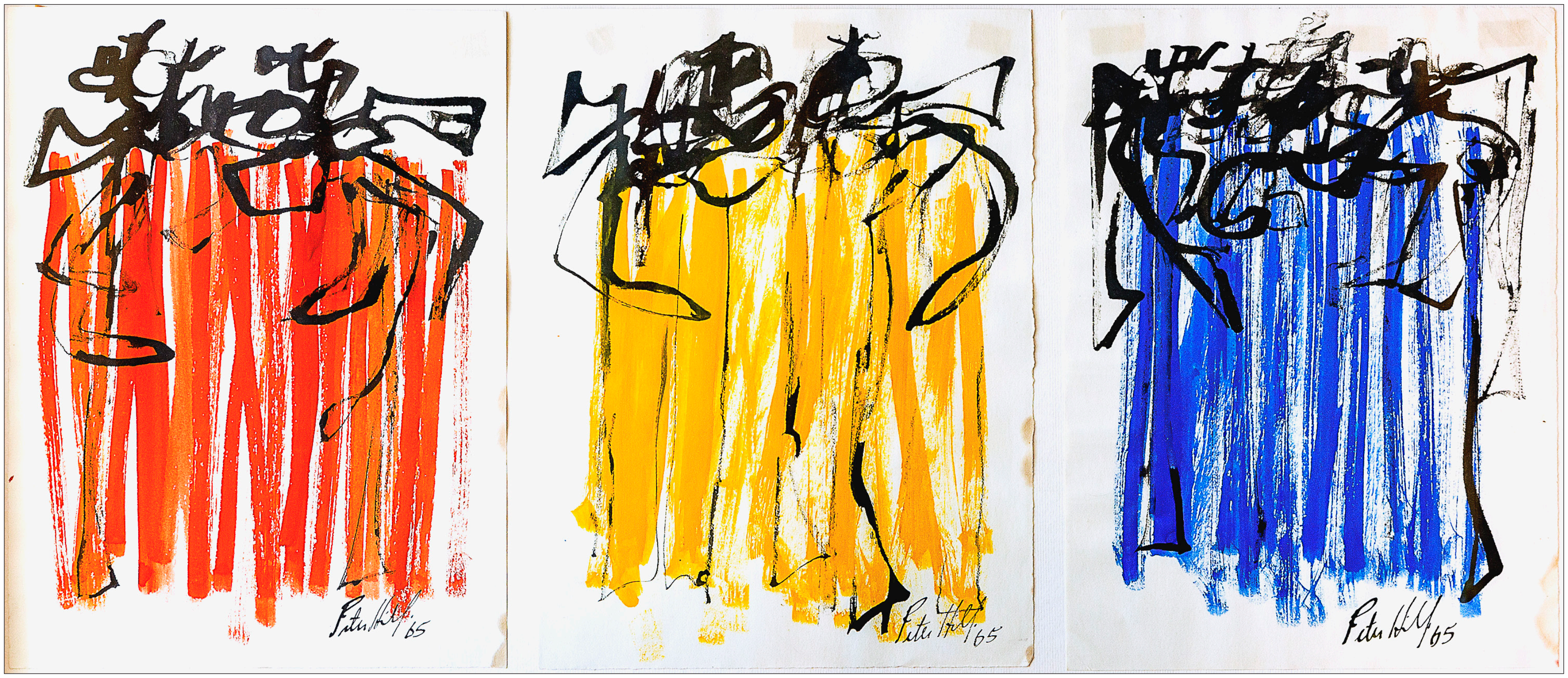
Untitled, 1965. Ink and acrylic on paper.
Collection of Stefanie Huff.



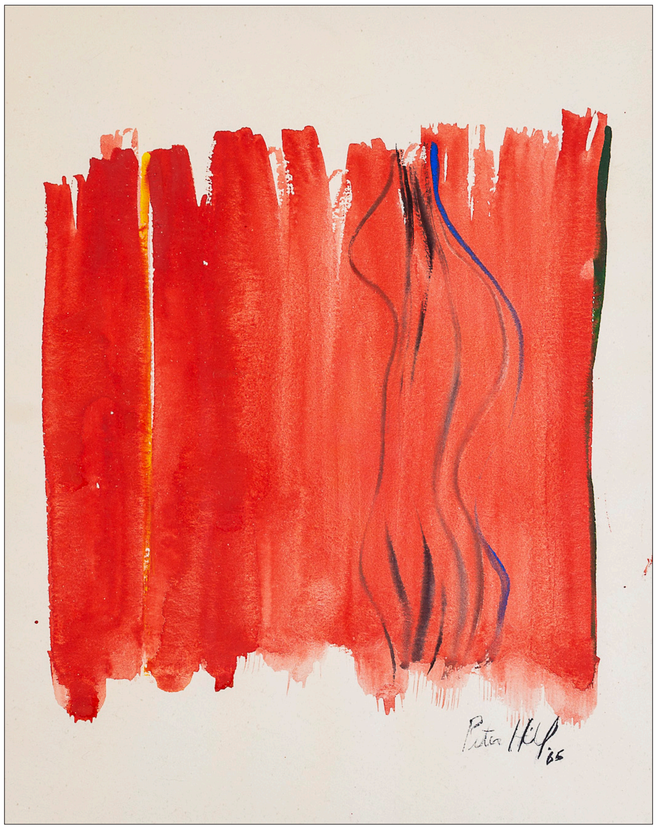
Untitled, 1965. Watercolor and gouache on paper, 20 x 33 in.
Collection of Alice and Austen Ulmer.



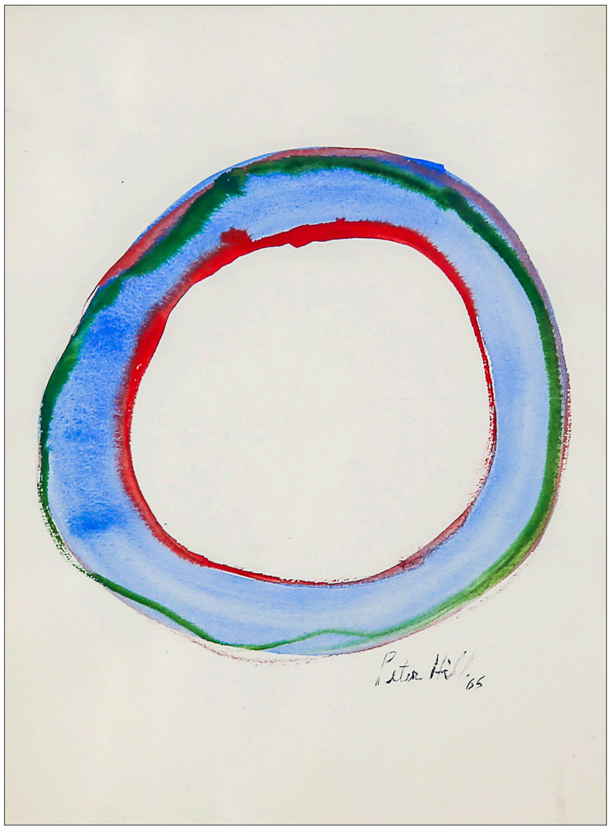
Untitled, 1965.
Ink and watercolor, 10 x 13 in.



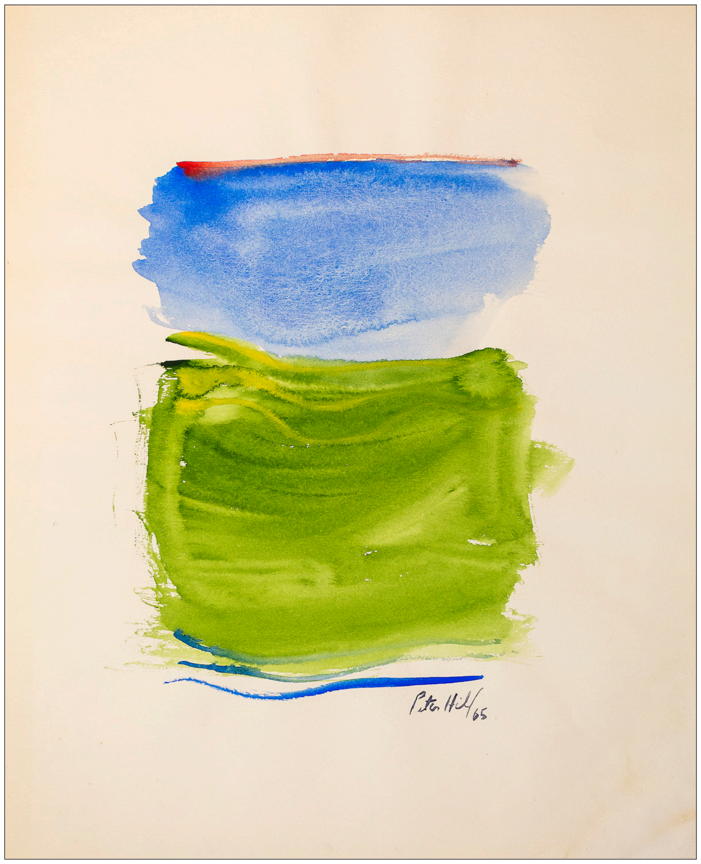
Three Drawings, 1965. Gouache on paper, each 12 x 9 in. Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.



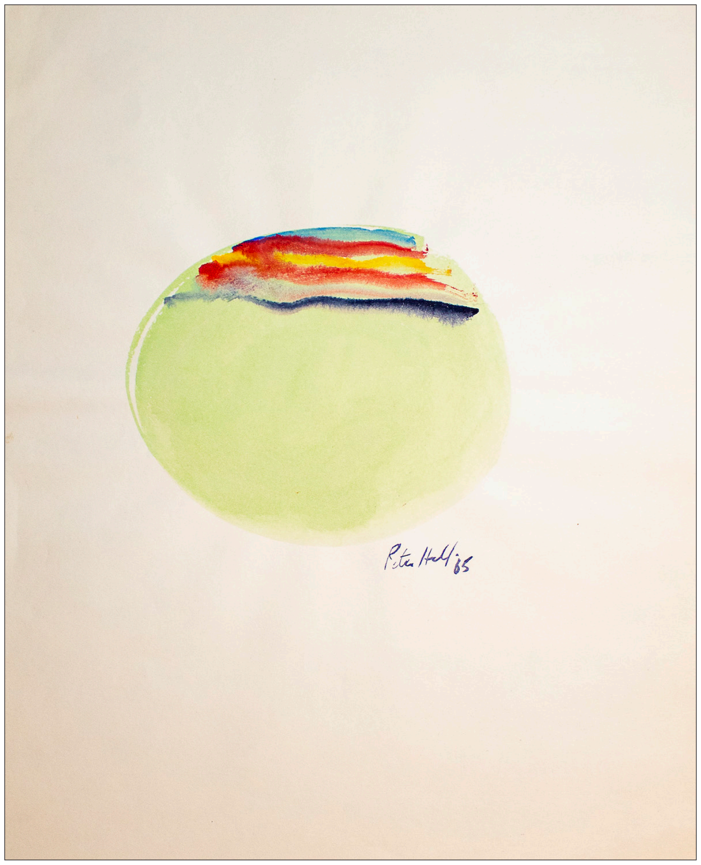
Untitled, 1965. Watercolor on paper, 10 x 8 in.
Collection of Alice and Austen Ulmer.



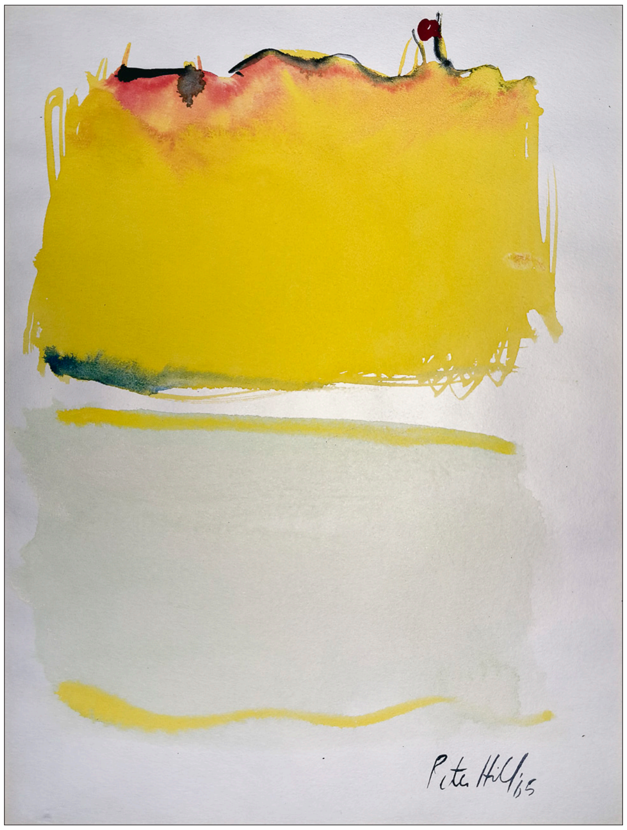
Untitled, 1965. Watercolor on paper, 10 x 8 in.
Collection of Mary and Sam Achelpohl.



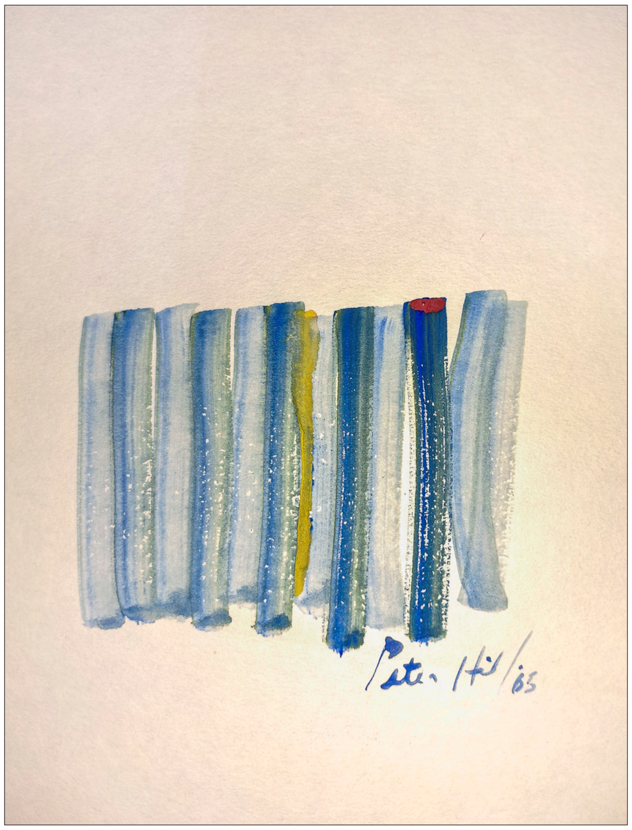
Untitled, 1965. Watercolor on paper, 18 x 12 in.



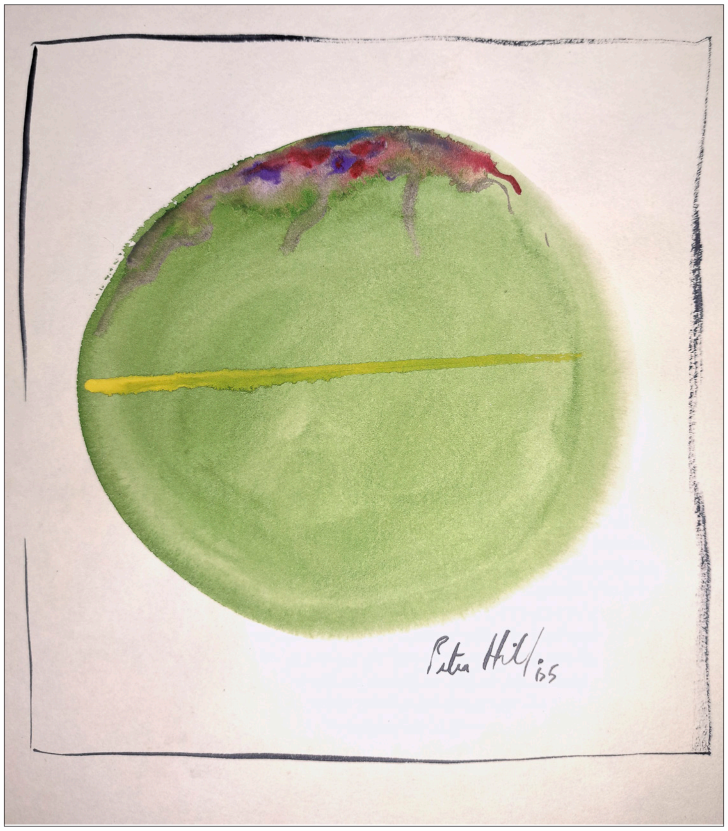
Untitled, 1965. Watercolor on paper, 18 x 12 in.



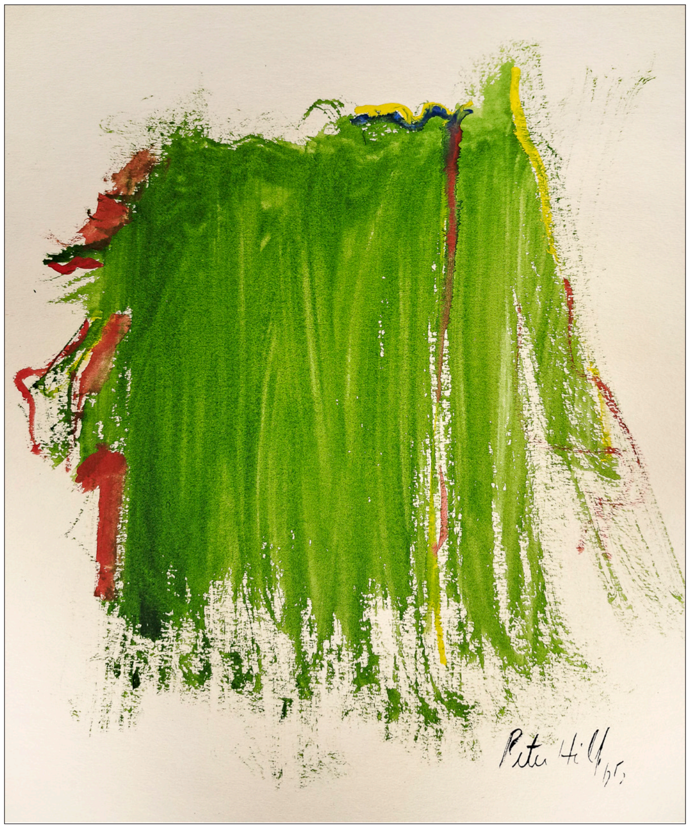
Untitled, 1965. Watercolor on paper.
Collection of Gerald Koziol.



Untitled, 1965. Watercolor on paper.
Collection of Gerald Koziol.



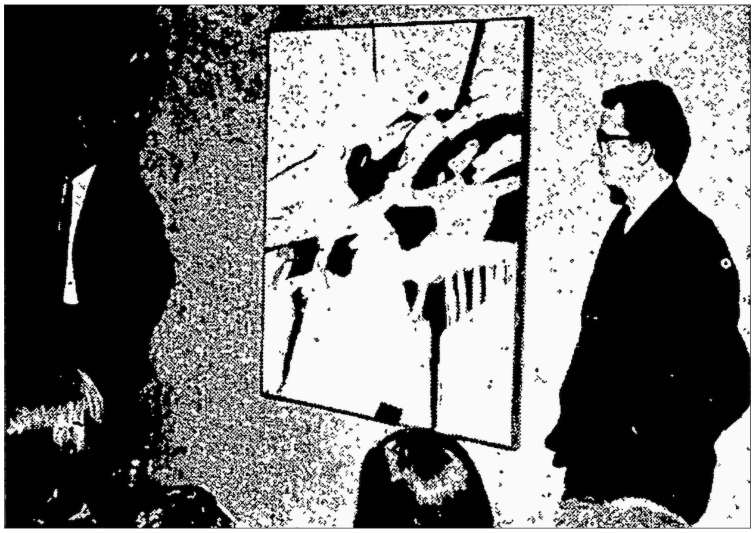
Untitled, 1965. Watercolor on paper.
Collection of Gerald Koziol.



Untitled, 1965. Watercolor on paper.
Collection of Gerald Koziol.

The *Doane Owl*, November 24, 1964

Hillman Reviews Peter Hill



Peter Hill (left) discusses one of his paintings currently on exhibit in Goodall Gallery with Roger Williams and a group of students and guests.

Peter Hill, exhibiting artist this month at the Goodall Gallery, last Wednesday discussed and answered questions about his paintings. I was late but when I got there Bruce Everett was asking Mr. Hill, "What sort of thing inspires you to paint (the way you do)?"

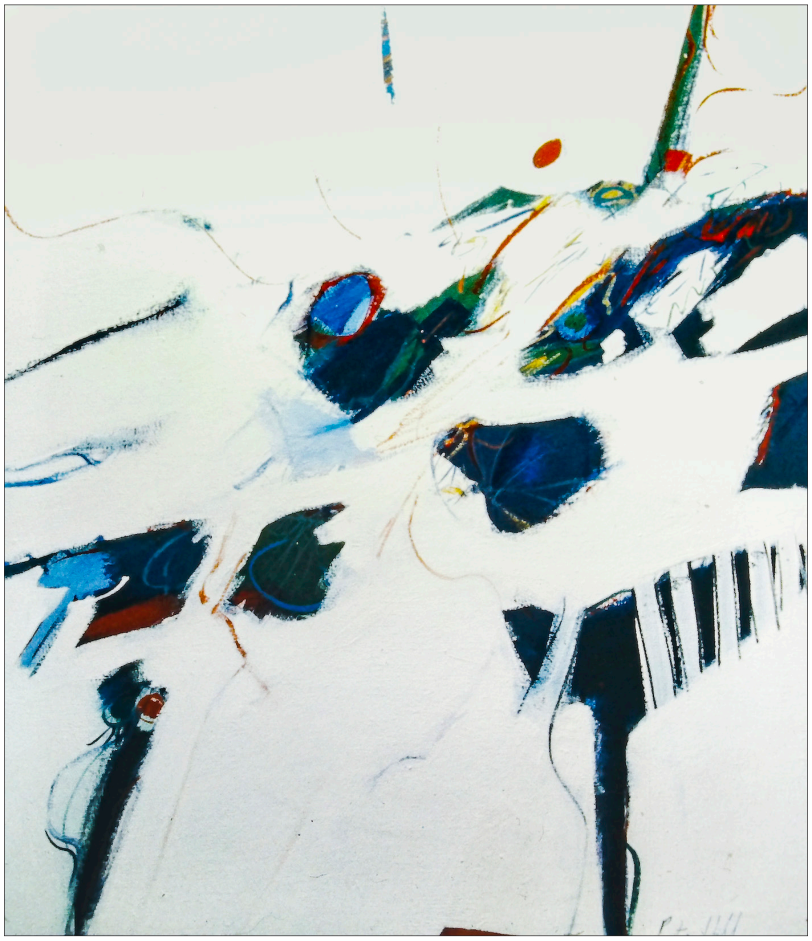
"Oh, a lot of things. I draw a lot. These things here in Goodall under glass are properly called drawings. Sometimes the things in the drawings show up in the paintings, maybe a year or two later. When the idea gets started, I begin 'cutting back,' relating my ideas. Circles, form, color—one painting suggests another."

Mr. Hill's titles brought questions from several people. The titles are not to be taken too seriously. "I could just as easily call these 'compositions' as 'Telemann Tree' [p. 125] or 'Phoenix.'"

(The idea for this latter painting came to Mr. Hill from the "legend of the Phoenix Bird," and this painting with its brilliant red-oranges and blue grays, is certainly one of the exhibit's strongest paintings.) The "Bach" painting draws its title and motif from Mr. Hill's interest in Baroque music. "I collect a lot of records and when I play them, sometimes a feeling gets started."

One painting, "Burnham Wood," comes from Shakespeare's "Macbeth" and commemorates the poet's birthday year.

"Syracuse" [p. 121], a large painting with a red and black motif in a field of white, owes some of its form to "pop" art. The hard-edged red and black bottom shows a certain amount of the pop artist's "determination." "Hard-edged painting is the best way to learn composition." Hill's training was in abstract expressionist school of thought—"which I really don't feel much. Blackwell, the head of my department at Omaha, calls my painting 'baroque abstract expressionism.' It's supposed to be sort of a derogatory term. I don't know."



Title unknown, 1964. Acrylic on canvas. 60 x 48 in.

Part of Hill's "baroque" style is his interest in the optical-visual experience which viewers have in seeing his paintings. "Warrior I" [p. 126] is a two-dimensional "struggle between red and blue." It is this interest in the visual phenomenon of clashing struggling colors that ties him to the new "Op Art" movement, which concerns itself entirely with this optical experience.

This baroque flavor or style of mind is something which is lacking in most college art students. "High schools should teach formal art history courses. College freshmen don't know Caravaggio, Donatello. Partly this is because Latin is being phased out of high schools."

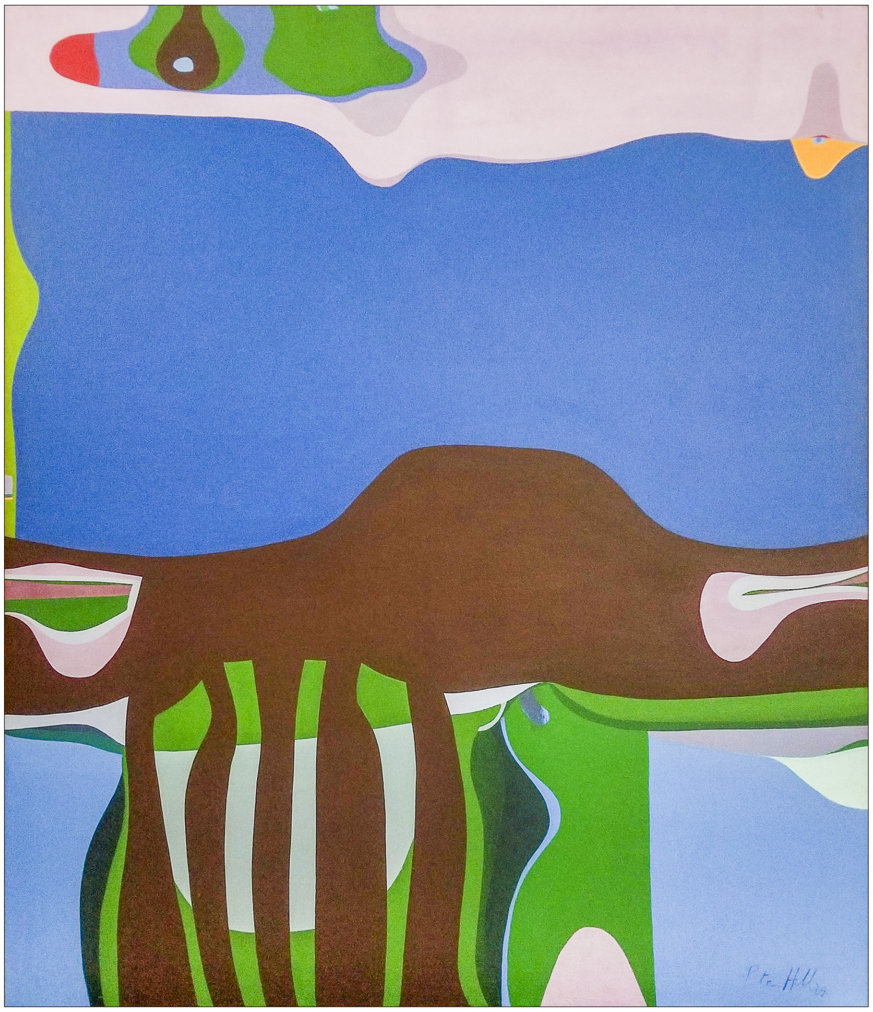
Hill wants top art people to go out and teach in high school: “It seems incongruous to be teaching art without ever having practiced in it. And yet this is the general situation today with high school art teachers.”

Someone at this point asked Peter Hill whether teaching would be necessary for a painter or sculptor. “Ideally the artist should be able to make a living selling his paintings. But if you say you’re going to be a painter and live by selling artistically good paintings, I worry about you. It’s a long time between meals.” This is especially true for artists working in the Great American Midwest. It is impossible for a painter or sculptor to build an artistic reputation only on his Nebraskan–Midwest exhibits; he must necessarily ship his work to bigger places.

“It is the museums, colleges, and universities that set the scene for art . . . Omaha is not the Mecca of art that it should be, because Joslyn museum doesn’t have the patronage and money to be a little uncompromising. The Sheldon is a much better setup.”

Mr. Hill elaborated on why the Joslyn Museum is not a more important place for artists: “When the major show of a museum like Joslyn is a quilting show, it’s a confusing situation (for painters). You can’t find anything to utilize in a quilting show unless you’re pretty unusual. I personally can’t find anything to utilize . . . Besides that, Omaha won’t tolerate some of the more advanced ideas. I’ve heard of the Joslyn censoring paintings that come in saying what is art and what isn’t. Really, though, it’s better if it weren’t. I just criticize their policy a lot.”

“We’ve been talking about freedom in art. I could make an analogy to the Ecumenical Council’s current struggle between conservatism and liberalism. Anyway, the problem in art is that by the time a generation of forward-looking people get into positions where they can influence things, there’s another rebellion generation following at its heels.”



from *Prize-Winning Paintings, Book 7*, 1967

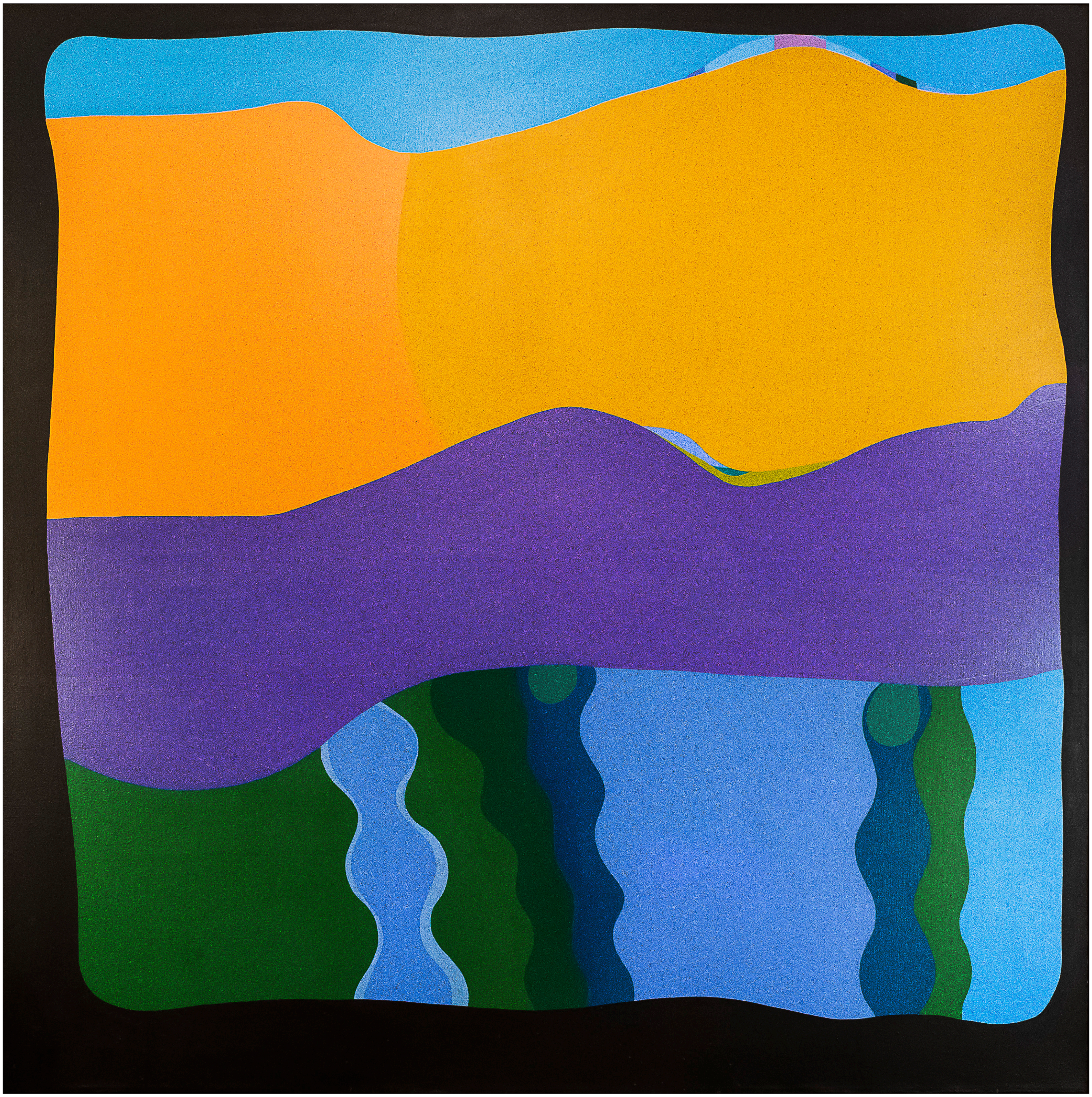
Top Award in Midwest Exhibit

DIDO II *by Peter Hill*

Statement by the artist:

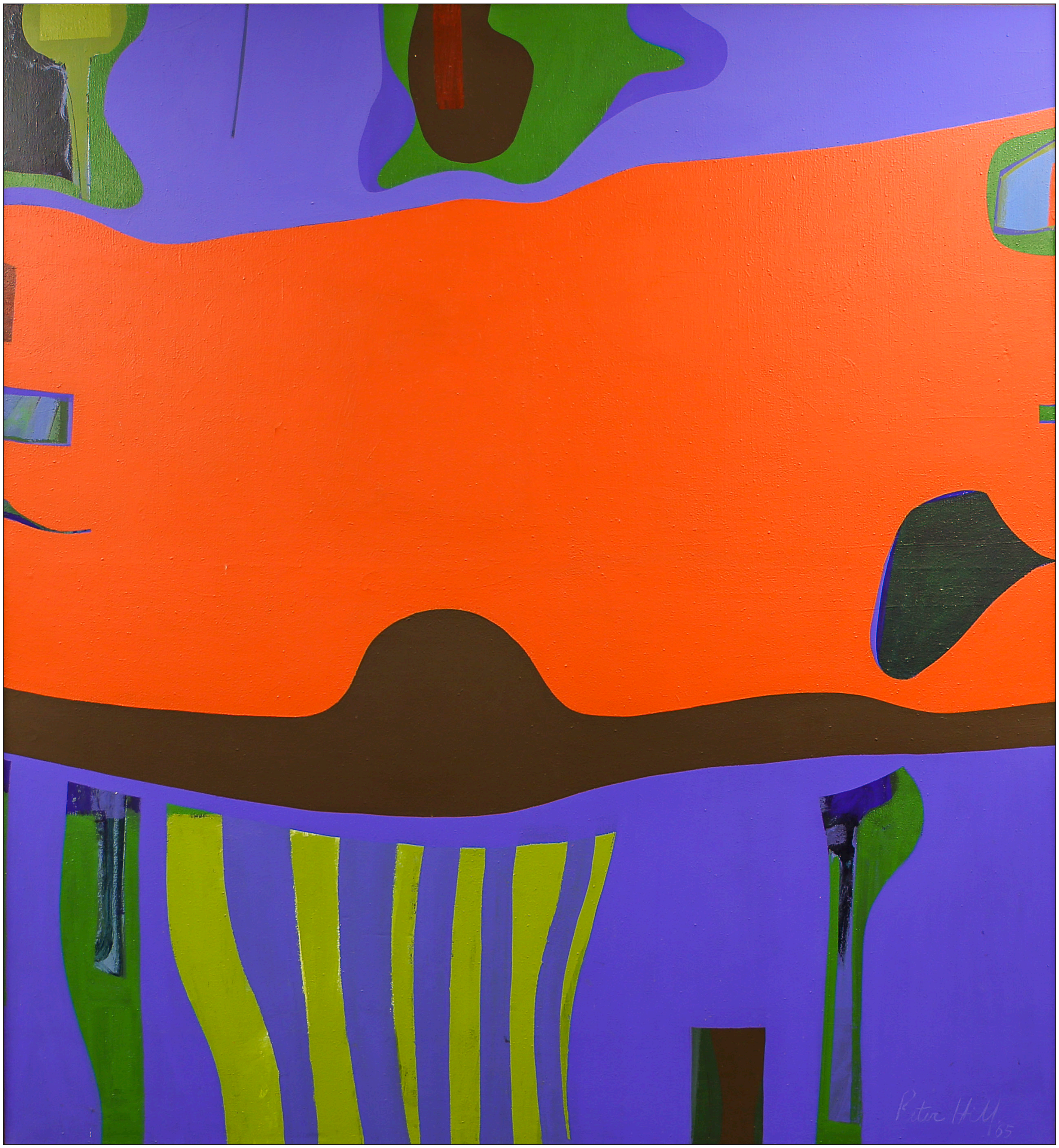
I have had a lifelong interest in ancient people and their lore. "Dido II" is just one of many paintings with a reference to a character out of antiquity. With these subjects I try to show the heroic. The problem while painting them is to catch the feeling of an ancient personality within a contemporary environment. For me, "Dido II" comes close to a solution, but with each new painting, the dilemma begins again, and it all seems so unresolved.

Dido II, 1965. Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 62 in.
Collection of the Joslyn Museum of Art.
Photograph courtesy of the museum.



Dido

1965. Acrylic on canvas, 70 x 70 in.
Collection of Jonathan and Maureen Hill


Peter Hill
'65

Dido III

1965. Acrylic on canvas, 69 x 64 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

Remembrance by Ward Schumaker

Omaha World-Herald, March 15, 1965

'Top Painting Not Obscene'

Omaha Artists Send Governor Protest

A controversy between four Omaha artists and a representative of the Crossroads Shopping Center erupted Sunday as to whether a painting judged first in the Third Annual Governor's Art Show is obscene.

Peter Hill, Omaha University assistant professor of art and a member of the advisory committee for the exhibit, said the charges that the painting is obscene are "completely absurd."

Mr. Hill said the painting, which is a pop art take-off of Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam," is controversial "simply because it is modern art."

He said the picture hung in his office at the university for several weeks before the show. During that time, Mr. Hill said, he could find nothing offensive in it.

The painting was created by Ward Schumaker, a student of Mr. Hill.

The controversy came to light when a copy of a protest letter, sent to Governor Morrison, was received by *The World-Herald*.

In the letter—signed by Mr. Hill; Thomas Bartek, exhibition director at Joslyn Art Museum; Thomas Majeski, another member of the O.U. art department; and Thomas D. Palmerton, an Omaha commercial artist—the four charged a representative of the Crossroads tampered with the judges' decision and then forced Mr. Schumaker to accept payment for the painting and agree to withdraw it from the show.

Mr. Hill said the letter "was to inform the Governor as to what was going on."

Gary Healy, public relations representative of the Crossroads, was named by the artists as the one who sparked the controversy. Mr. Healy was not available Sunday night for comment.

An aid to Governor Morrison, Gene Budig, said the Governor had no comment Sunday night; however, he would have a statement this morning.

The Gateway, March 19, 1965

Artists Protest Removal By Further Withdrawals

"This painting removed by the artist in protest against the suppression of the winning painting to be hung in the exhibition by the officials of the Crossroads Merchants Association."

Thus read the signs which took the place of paintings removed Monday morning, March 15, at the Third Annual Governor's Art Show which was held in the Crossroads Arcade. Ward Douglas Schumaker, OU senior art major, whose picture was judged First Place winner, was purchased by the Crossroads Merchants Association, and withdrawn. Mr. Schumaker said he regretted selling the painting, but said, "I needed the money and thought I would get none if I didn't."

Adam

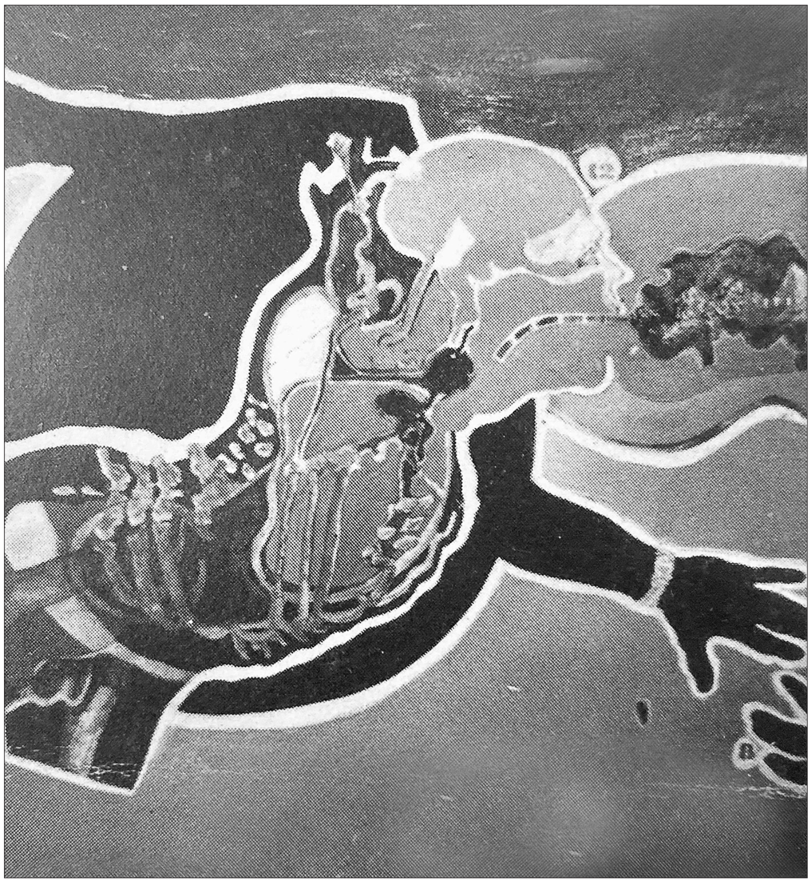
The controversy began after the painting had been selected as first place. The painting is an anatomical drawing based on Michelangelo's Creation of Adam and was described by officials of the association as "one you would not want hung in your living room." "Art in a show like this should uplift a man and not degrade him," commented Governor Morrison. Dr. J. V. Blackwell, art department head, said, "The original mistake was an ironic error on the part of the Crossroads officials. They incorrectly identified the femur, a bone in the upper part of the leg, giving it erotic symbolism. It is my understanding that Mr. Gary Healy was pressured to withdraw the painting."

Letter

A letter signed by Peter Hill, OU assistant professor of art and member of the Advisor Committee for the exhibit . . . was sent to Governor Morrison when discovery of the switch in pictures was made. Mr. Hill said that Mr. Schumaker's painting was controversial "simply because it is modern art." He also said it was not obscene.

Mr. Schumaker considers this a personal attack and said that they evidently wanted a show of painters and not artists, because where art exists, so does controversy.

The purpose of this show is to provide facilities, to give the public opportunity to view the work of Nebraska artists, to foster interest in art, and assist in the cultural development of our state. This was stated on a sign at the exhibition. . . .



Ward Schumaker, after Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam*, 1965

Acceptance

Governor Morrison said he does not believe in censorship in any form or field, but said "I believe no art or any political structure will live unless it has popular acceptance." He suggested that next year's winner should be selected by vote of public viewers.

Many artists have removed their paintings from the show. Thomas Palmerton said, "The judges' decision is final and should not be tampered with." Thus he withdrew his paintings from the show. Thomas Bartek, Joslyn Art Museum Exhibition Director, was the first to withdraw his painting. He said Tuesday that most of the "professional artists and serious students" had done the same. About 50 paintings were removed by Tuesday morning.

Mr. Bartek said, "If a judge hands down a decision, the lawyers involved do not reverse that decision regardless of their personal preference. Neither can a merchant making a contract with his fellows, reverse it arbitrarily. Why should separate standards be applied to the artistic community?"

Ward Schumaker is a San Francisco–based artist whose paintings and hand-painted books have appeared in one-man shows in Shanghai, San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles. Formerly an illustrator, his work has appeared in more than 150 magazines worldwide, including The New York Times, The Atlantic, Le Monde, *and* Esquire Japan.

When I think of Peter Hill, the first and overriding image is his smile, his joie de vivre.

The man always seems so delighted, so very amused—and happy—to be teaching painting, art history, and (his seemingly favorite subject) the legend of Gilgamesh.

My mind didn't actually quicken to learning about Gilgamesh, but Peter Hill was the only person I'd ever gotten to meet who understood abstract expressionism, the religion I'd already decided would become my one true faith.

Then in painting classes, he taught what I consider to be the most important aid: that neither technique, nor aesthetics, nor talk will get you where you want to go. Only work will get you there. Work, work, and more work is the only activity that will get you to your destination: to become a real artist.

Best advice I ever got.

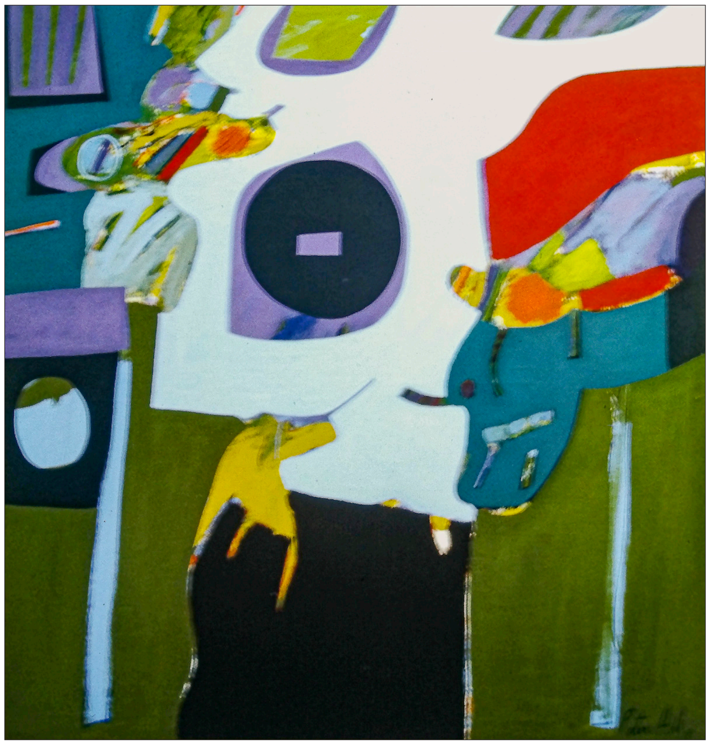
—Ward Schumaker

The Gateway, November 19, 1965

Protest

A member of the art club protested the handling of the governor's centennial art show. This brought a reaction from a woman who identified herself as the president of the Nebraska League of Democratic Voters. She verbally attacked several members of the art club, assuring them that a night or two in jail would restore their sense of respect.

Pointing to a large painting by Peter Hill, she stated that it was the product of a jumbled mind. The picture was picked by University officials as a permanent work to be hung in the Milo Bail Student Center.



Ulysses, 1965. Acrylic on canvas, 69 x 69 in.
Collection of Wayne State University.

Michigan Artists Exhibition (Detroit Institute of Arts), exhibit gallery view, May 19–June 13, 1965. *Ulysses* at center.

The Gateway, May 7, 1965

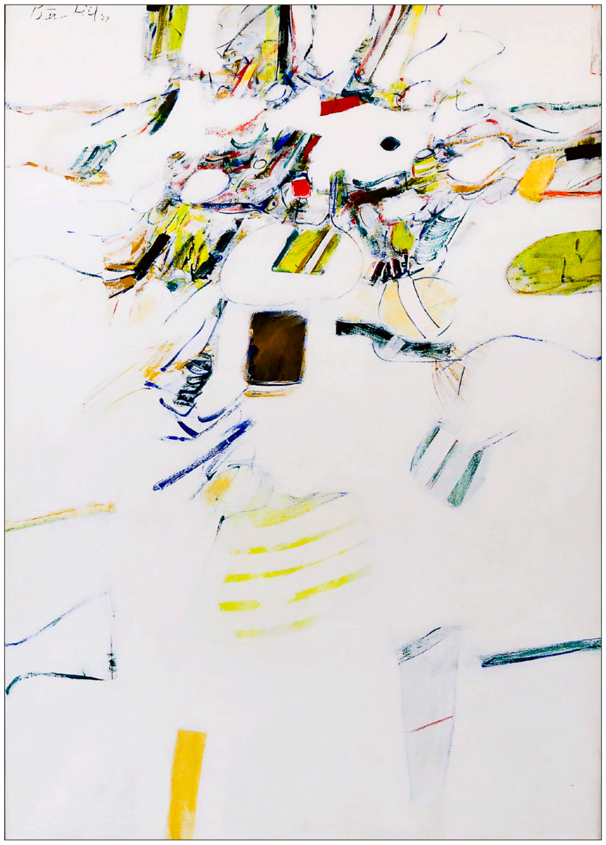
Kennedy Art Award Given To Peter Hill

Peter Hill, associate art professor, was awarded the John F. Kennedy Memorial Award at the 55th Annual Exhibition for Michigan Artists at the Detroit Art Institute. The show will open May 19 and last through June 20th. Mr. Hill entered his painting “Ulysses” which is a 5 x 6-foot acrylic. This painting was purchased for $600 as a gift of the graduating class of 1965 Wayne State University, Detroit, and will be hung in the Wayne State University Center.

Omaha World-Herald,
September 5, 1965

Peter Hill, after delivering two giant entries to Joslyn’s Omaha Area Show atop his microbus, is adding up the gains from his spring solo exhibition at Detroit’s Hanamura Gallery, and from the purchase award he received (at the Michigan Artists’ Annual) for a painting, “Ulysses,” bought as a John F. Kennedy memorial by the class of 1965 at Wayne State University, Detroit.

He’s also about to ship a canvas, “Pythian” [right; see also page 128], to the Burpee Art Museum at Rockford, Ill., to represent Nebraska at that institution’s Fifty-State Anniversary Show in October—50 painters, one from each state, picked by a big-name jury.



Pythian, 1964. Acrylic on canvas.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

Remembrance by Jim Butler

Jim Butler is Distinguished Professor of Art Emeritus in the School of Art at Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois. He founded the Normal Editions Workshop in 1976.

I was an undergraduate art student at Omaha University (now UNO) from 1963 to 1967. I remember Peter as an instructor who was immaculately dressed, wearing suits and cordovan shoes. He was always in control, using his sharp wit and language as a way to motivate his students. He expected his students to work hard and understand the discipline necessary to be a successful artist. When a student did not exhibit those qualities he let them know about it.

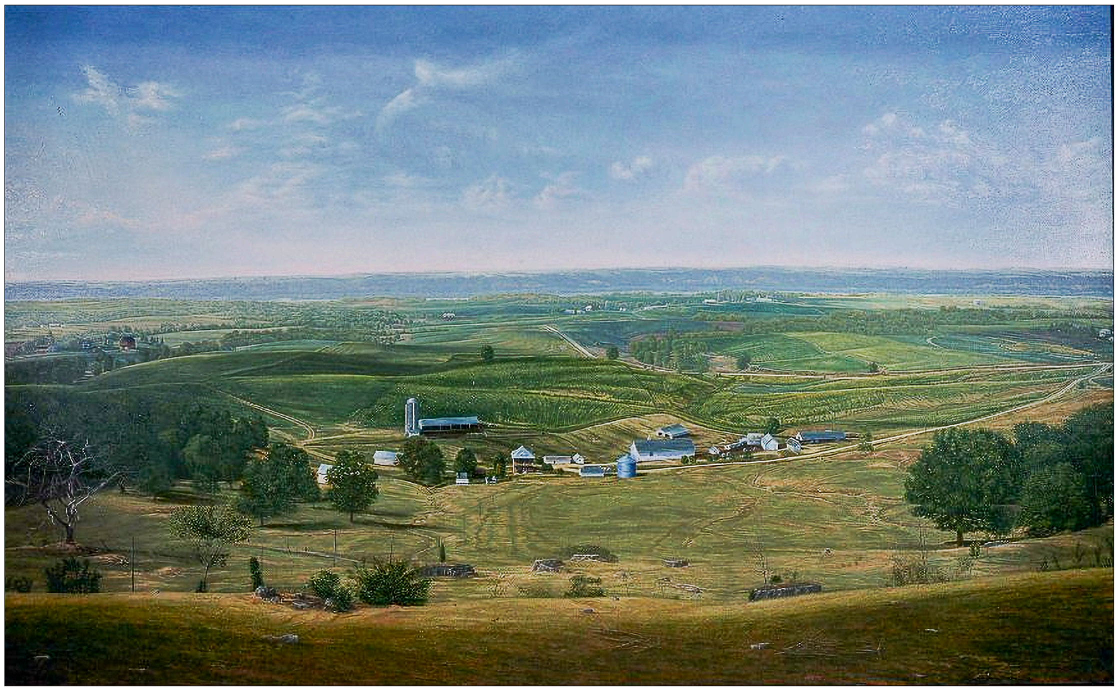
Peter loved art history and he used that knowledge when teaching painting. He would show images of important artists' work when critiquing our work. I took this example of good teaching and used it in my teaching for 39 years.

I thoroughly enjoyed Peter's art history classes. When I was accepted into graduate school at the University of Nebraska I was offered an assistantship to teach a survey of art history, or assist in studio classes. Peter strongly encouraged me to take the survey of art history assistantship, which was one of the best decisions of my life. It was the most difficult assistantship because of the amount of class preparation, but it prepared me for teaching in so many ways. That was Peter Hill, he never looked for the easy path for his students.

Peter was always an abstract artist. In my early days at Omaha U. Peter was an abstract expressionist. His work evolved, and the paintings became more hard-edged, with flatter color and surfaces. However, color was always central to his work and he was a brilliant colorist. There were so many ways that Peter Hill influenced my art and my life. I was a representational painter, but Peter taught me how good principles of design, composition, and color relationships were important elements in both abstraction and representation. He challenged me to find my own voice, and his encouragement was so instrumental in my artistic development.

Peter Hill was a role model for all of his students. He was always there when we needed encouragement, and I think about him every time I walk past his paintings in our collection.

—Jim Butler



Jim Butler, *Threshold*. 99 x 144 in.

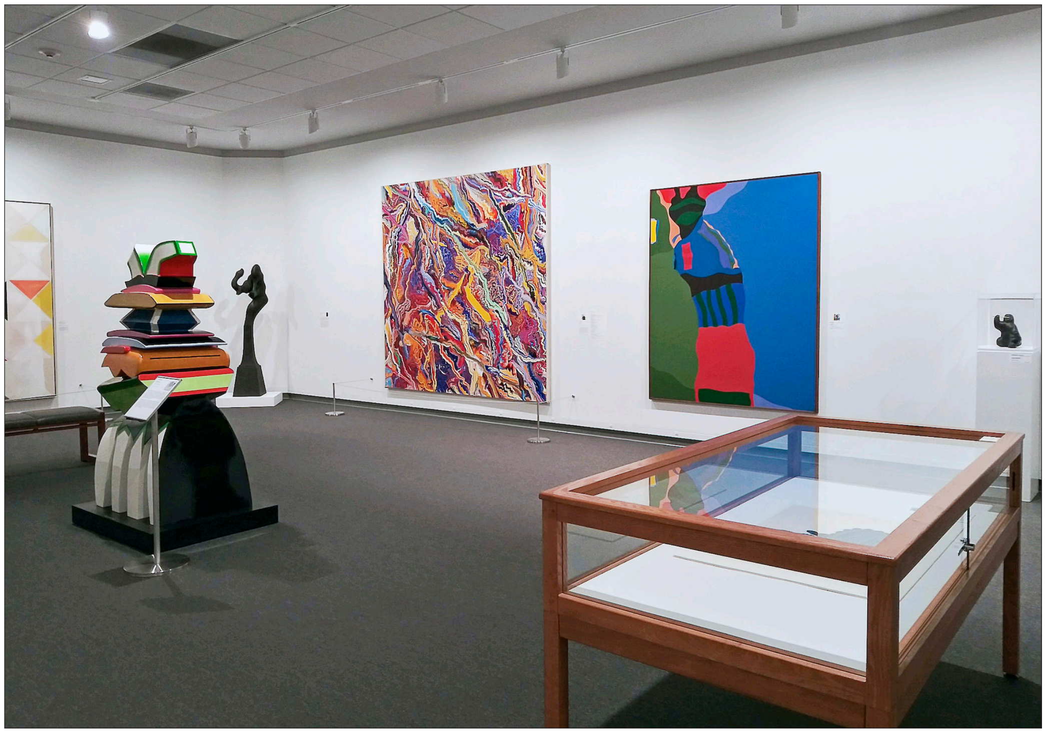
Success Follows Success: 1966 to 1968

If you're tired of hearing about my father's successes, just skip these years. Briefly:

- **1966:** The Joslyn Art Museum purchases *Dido II* (p. 149); the Waterloo Center for the Arts buys *Flight* (p. 161); the Springfield Art Museum acquires *Telemann* (p. 164); and *Octagon I* (p. 246) wins the Northwestern Bell Telephone Company Merit Award.
- **1967:** *Bluffs* (p. 172) wins top honors in Waterloo; the Sioux City Art Center purchases *Landscape* (p. 173); *Max* (p. 174) appears in the show "Nebraska Art After 100 Years" and enters the State Collection of Nebraska Art; and the Spiva Art Museum acquires *Thaw* (p. 180).
- **1968:** The Springfield Art Museum acquires *Lorelei* (above right and across).
- **1968:** He pulls a five-pound brook trout from God's River in Canada and wins a Manitoba Master Angler Award.

And, importantly for my father's university career: In 1967, UNO granted him tenure. Funny story: He didn't know it until Bob Kutak called to congratulate him.

I can only imagine how my father felt during these years, all these successes. The thing is, when it came to public accolades, these were the peak years. Although he'd win a few more awards over the next decades, he never saw ongoing success like this again.



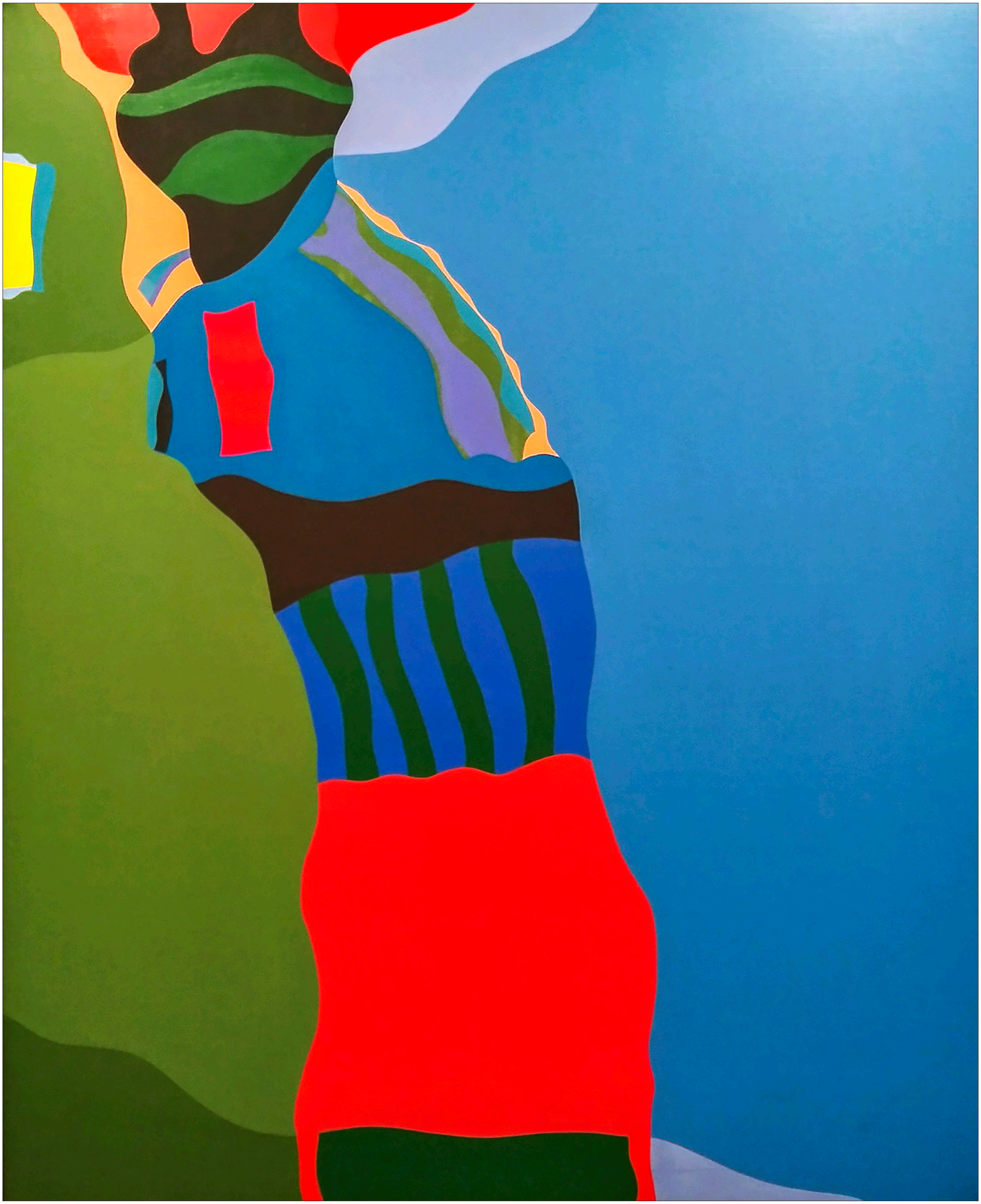
Lorelei at the Springfield Art Museum, Springfield, Missouri. Photograph courtesy of Sarah Buhr, Curator of Art.

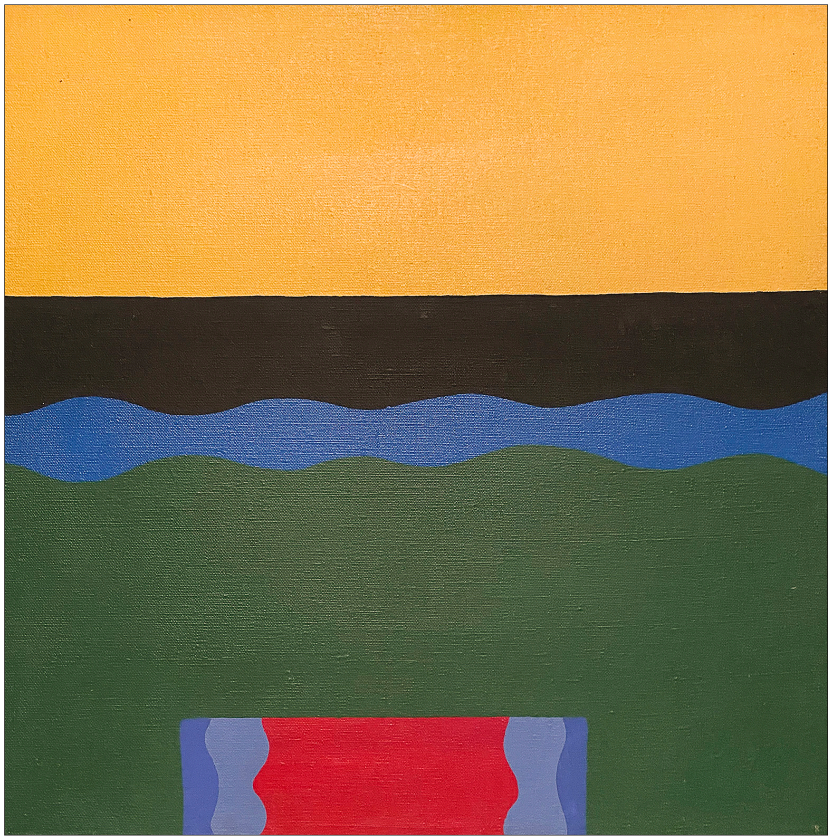
What happened? It wasn't for lack of talent or hard work. But there were reasons. To start, he lived in Nebraska, not New York or London; hard to be known so far outside international art circles. And I've discussed the effects of Kutak's patronage, which gave him freedom but also kept his best works private.

But the art world also changed. Modernism was out of vogue, giving way to art that was politically engaged (some types of Pop), allergic to expression (Minimalism), or anti-visual (Conceptual). Dad knew of these currents, and starting in 1969 he tackled Minimalism. But he did not have a Pop sensibility—the closest he came was a misfire he wanted destroyed (p. 166)—and his allegiance to visual pleasure meant that Conceptual Art was not a path.

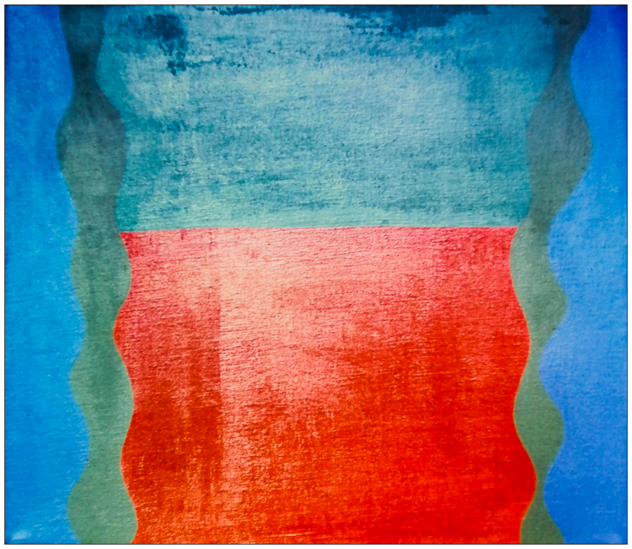
So, Modernist painting it had to be. His teaching remained central, and he accrued friends and eventual peers as he went. As for family, the routine was established. Four children growing, yearly trips to Canada, and occasional gatherings with friends; the salad days.

Opposite:
Lorelei, 1968. Acrylic, 81 x 65 in. Collection, Springfield Art Museum. Photograph courtesy of the museum.

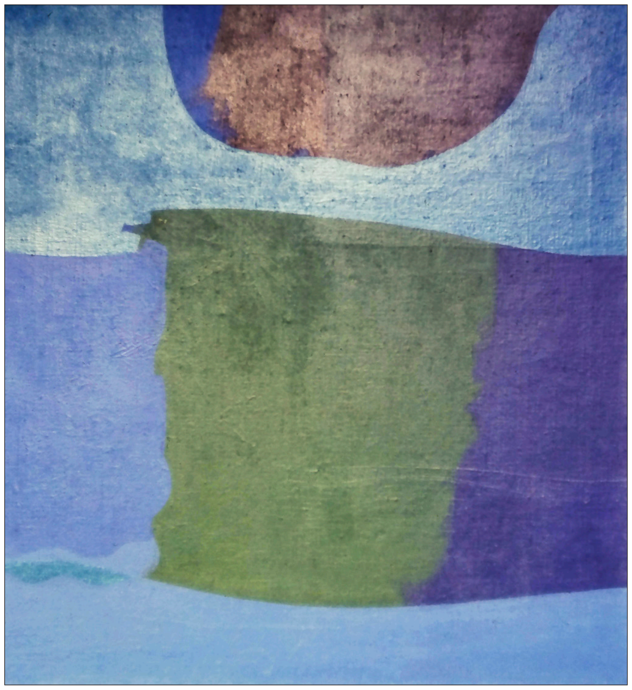




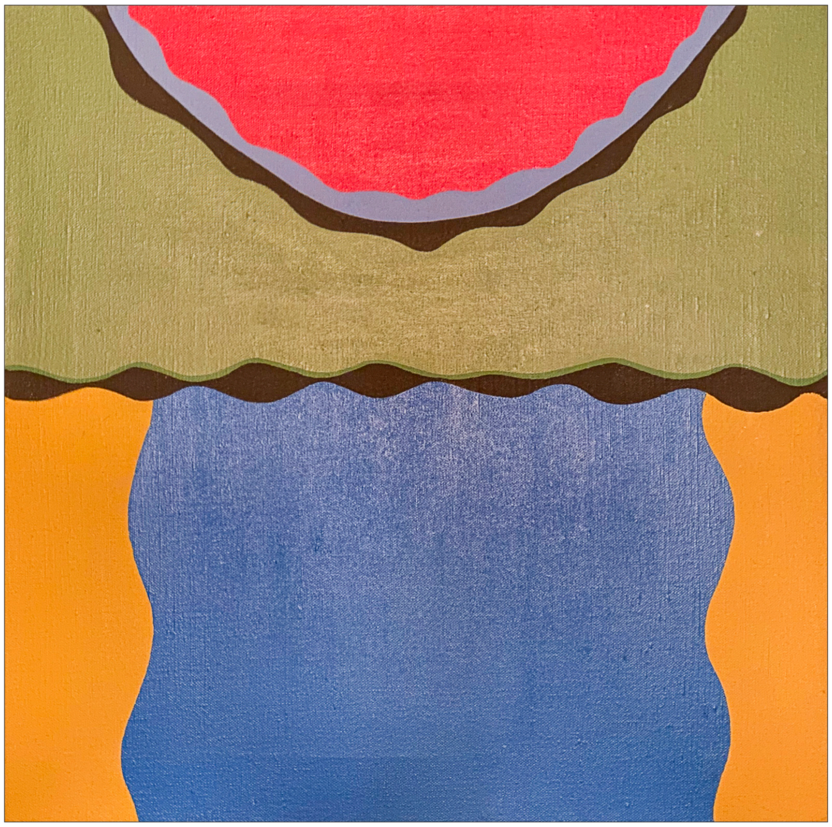
Untitled, 1966. Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 18 in.
Collection of Michael Rock.



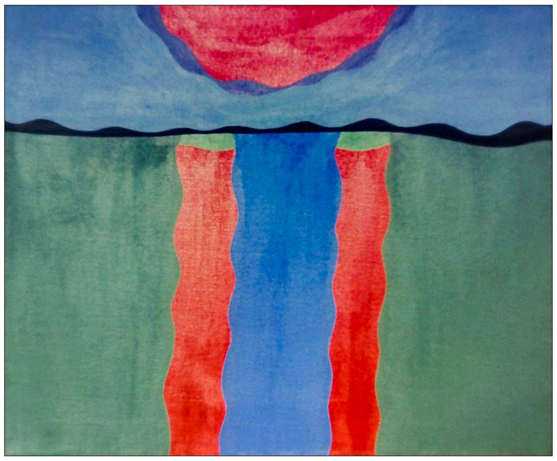
Untitled, 1966. Acrylic on canvas.



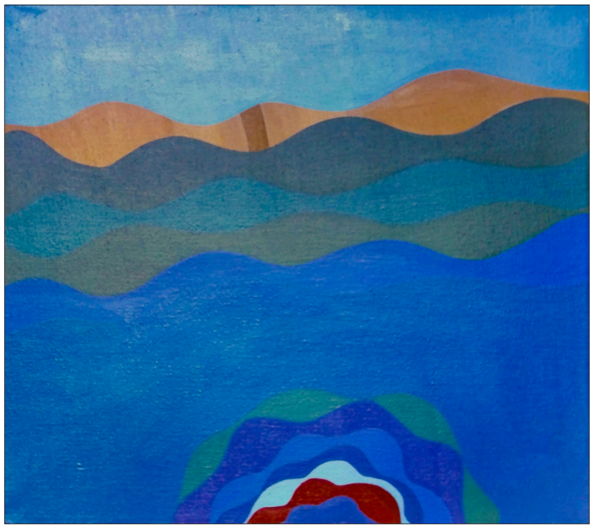
Untitled, 1966. Acrylic on canvas.



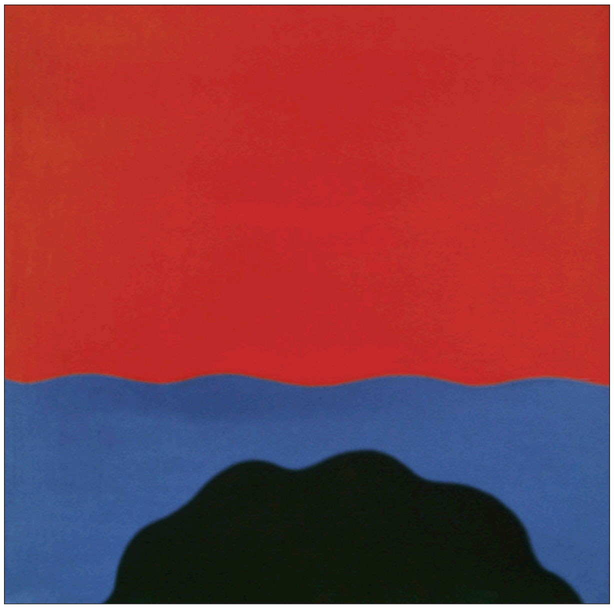
Untitled, 1966. Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 18 in.
Collection of Michael Rock.



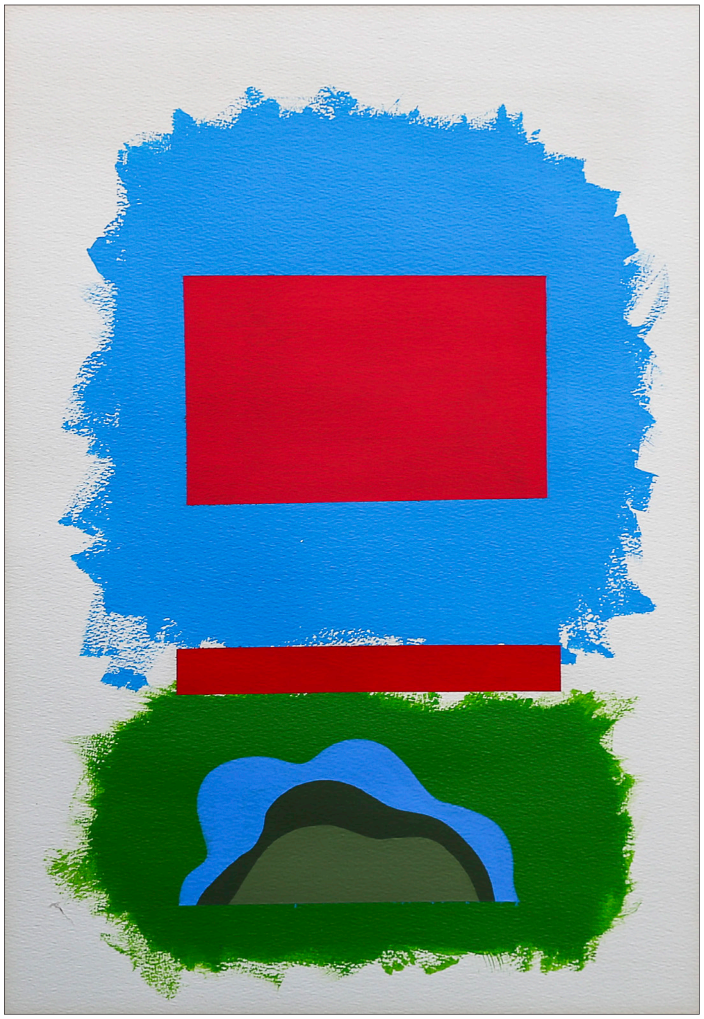
Landscape, 1966. Acrylic on canvas.



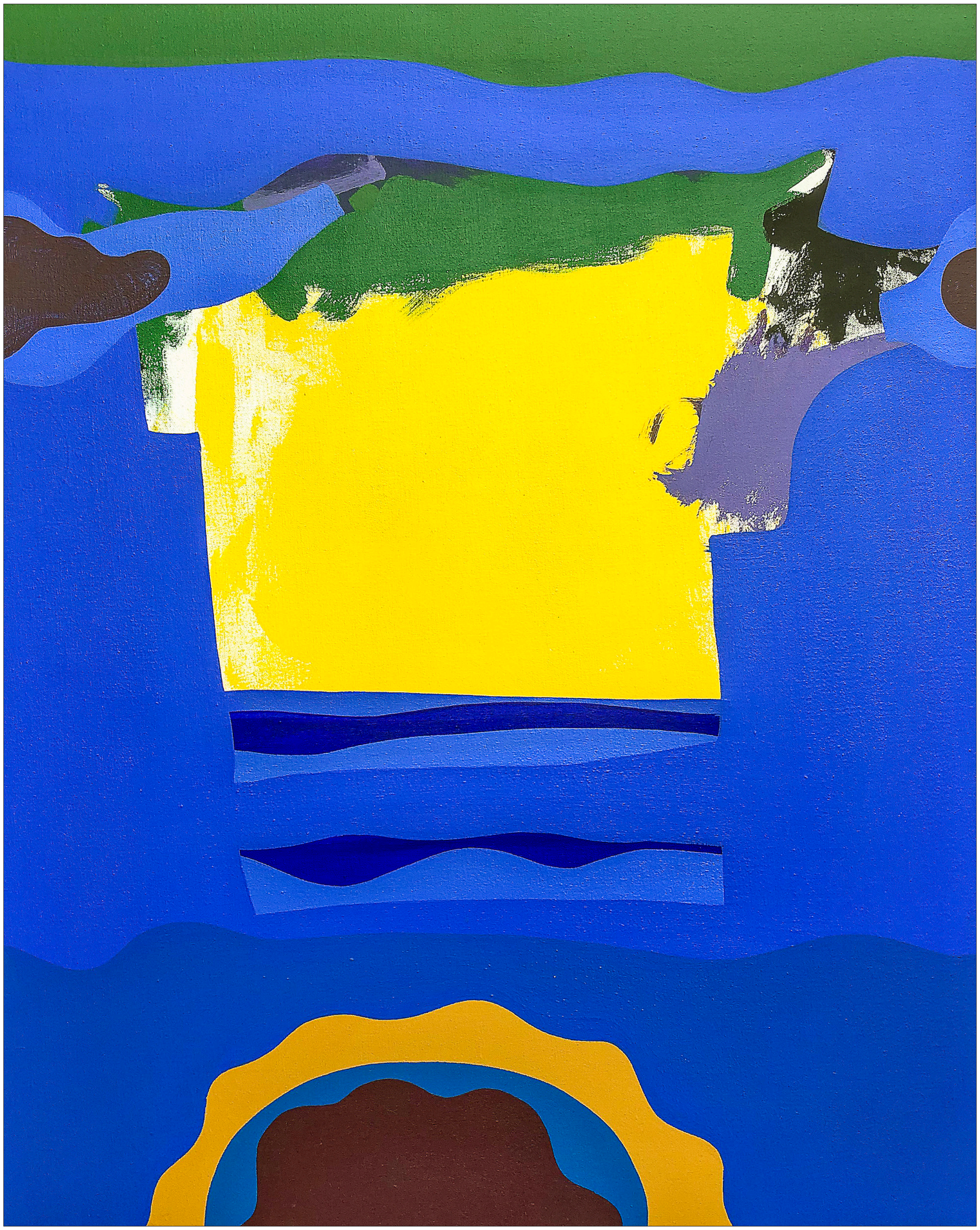
Wheat, 1966. Acrylic on canvas.



1966. Acrylic on canvas.

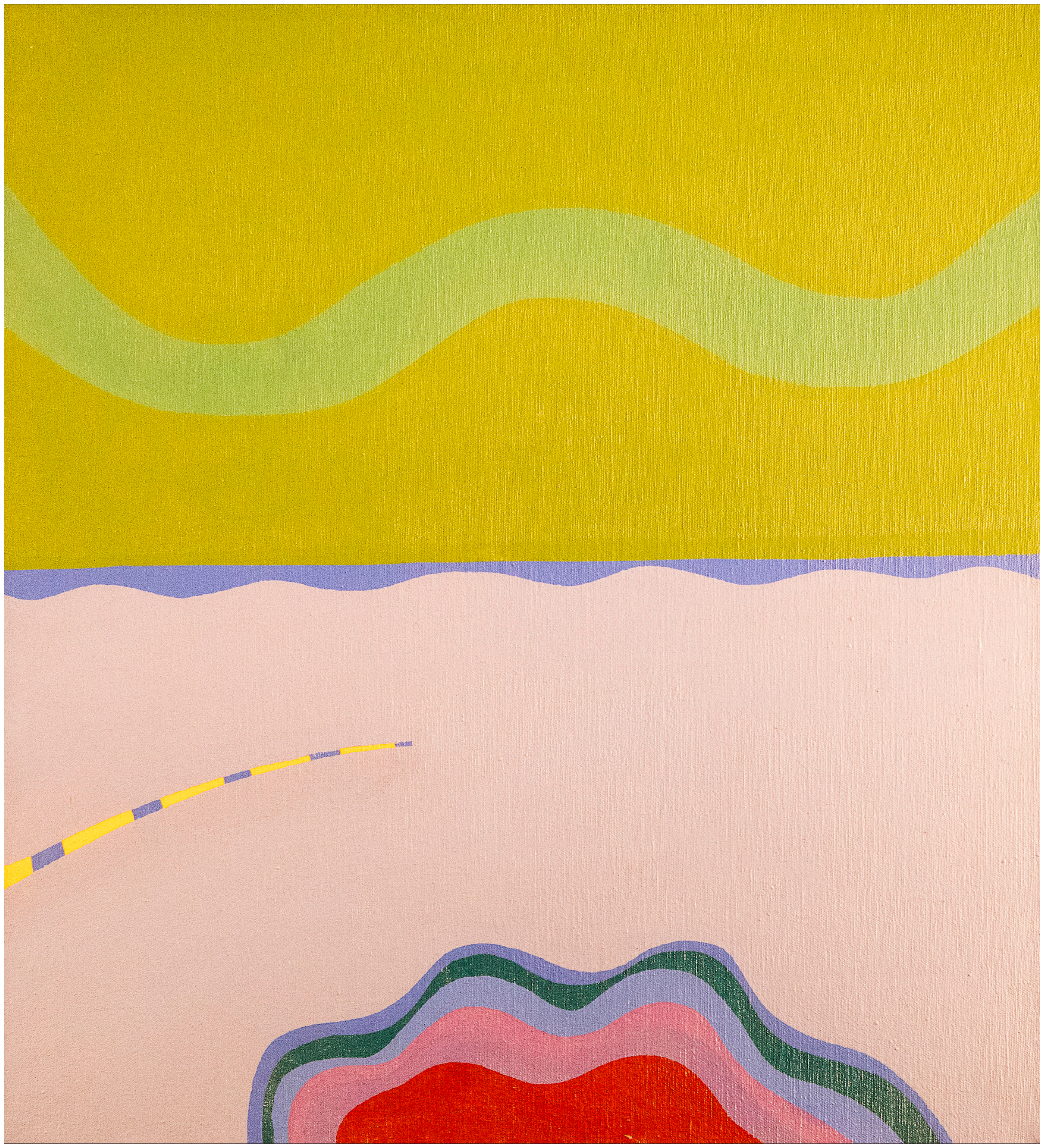


Untitled, n.d. Acrylic on paper, 18.5 x 13 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



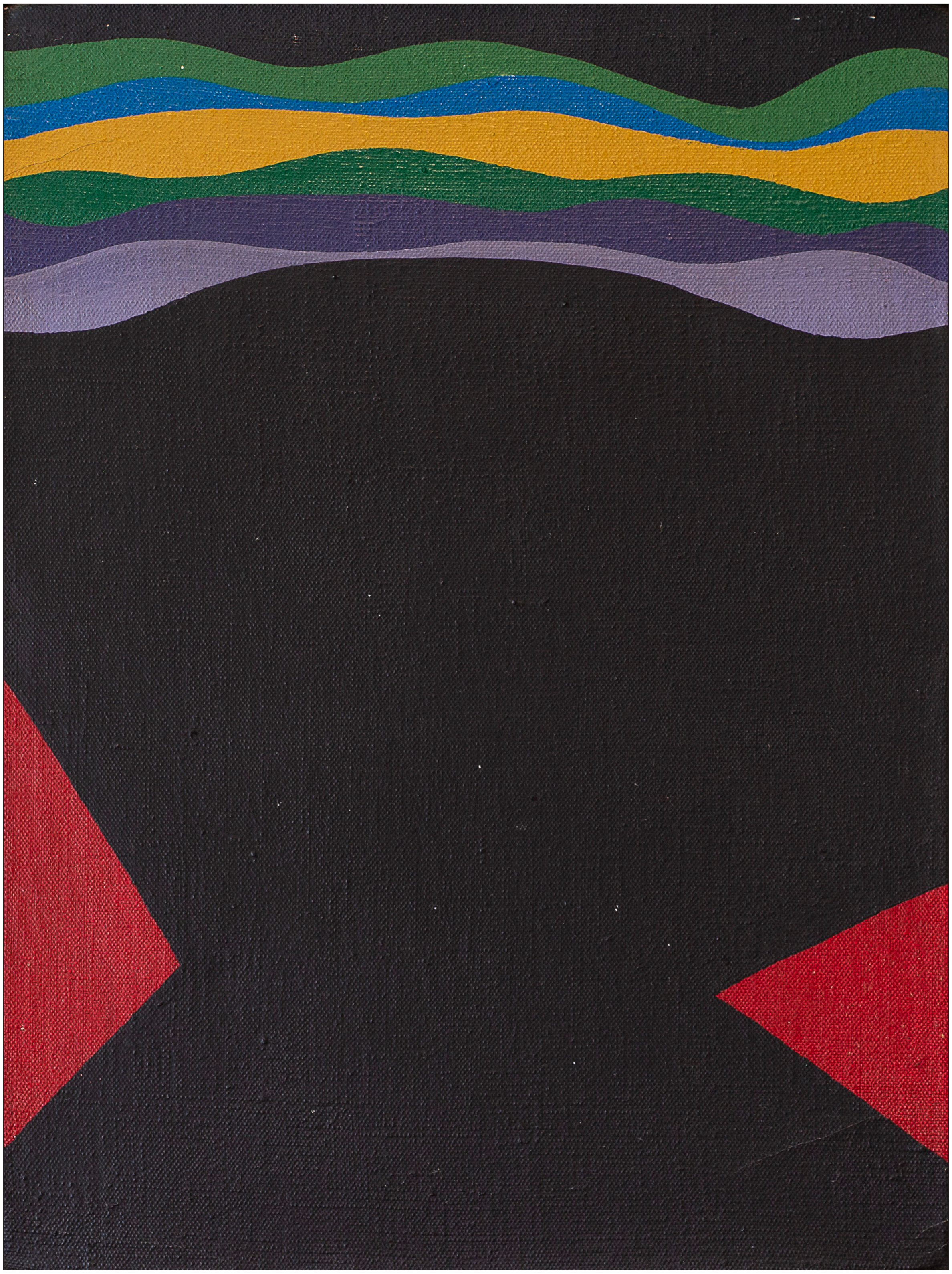
The Seal

1966. Acrylic on canvas, 30 x 24 in.
Exhibited at the 56th Exhibition for Michigan Artists, Detroit Institute of Arts. Collection of Jim Butler.



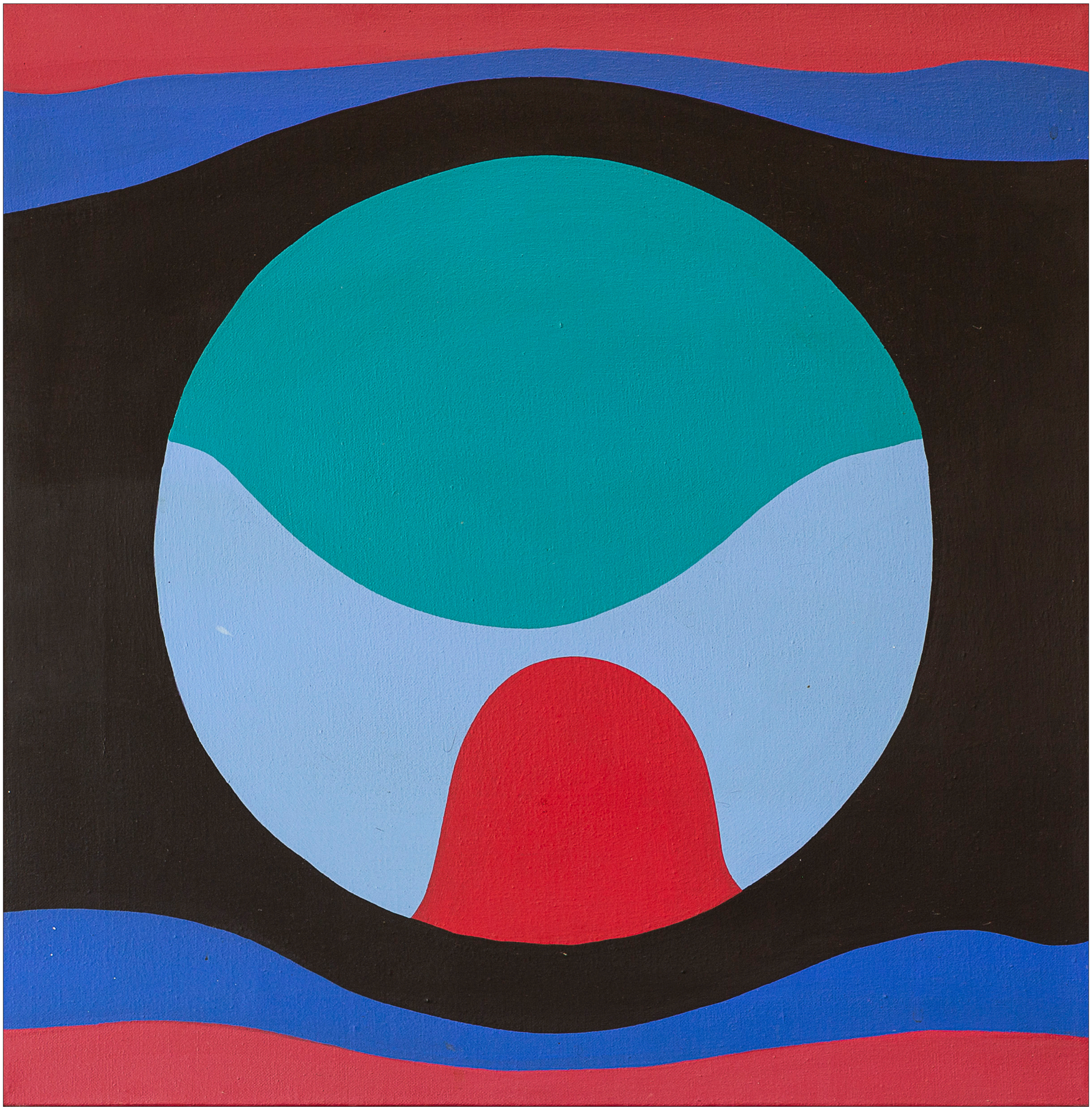
Flight

1966. Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 22 in.
Collection of the Waterloo Center for the Arts, Waterloo, Iowa.



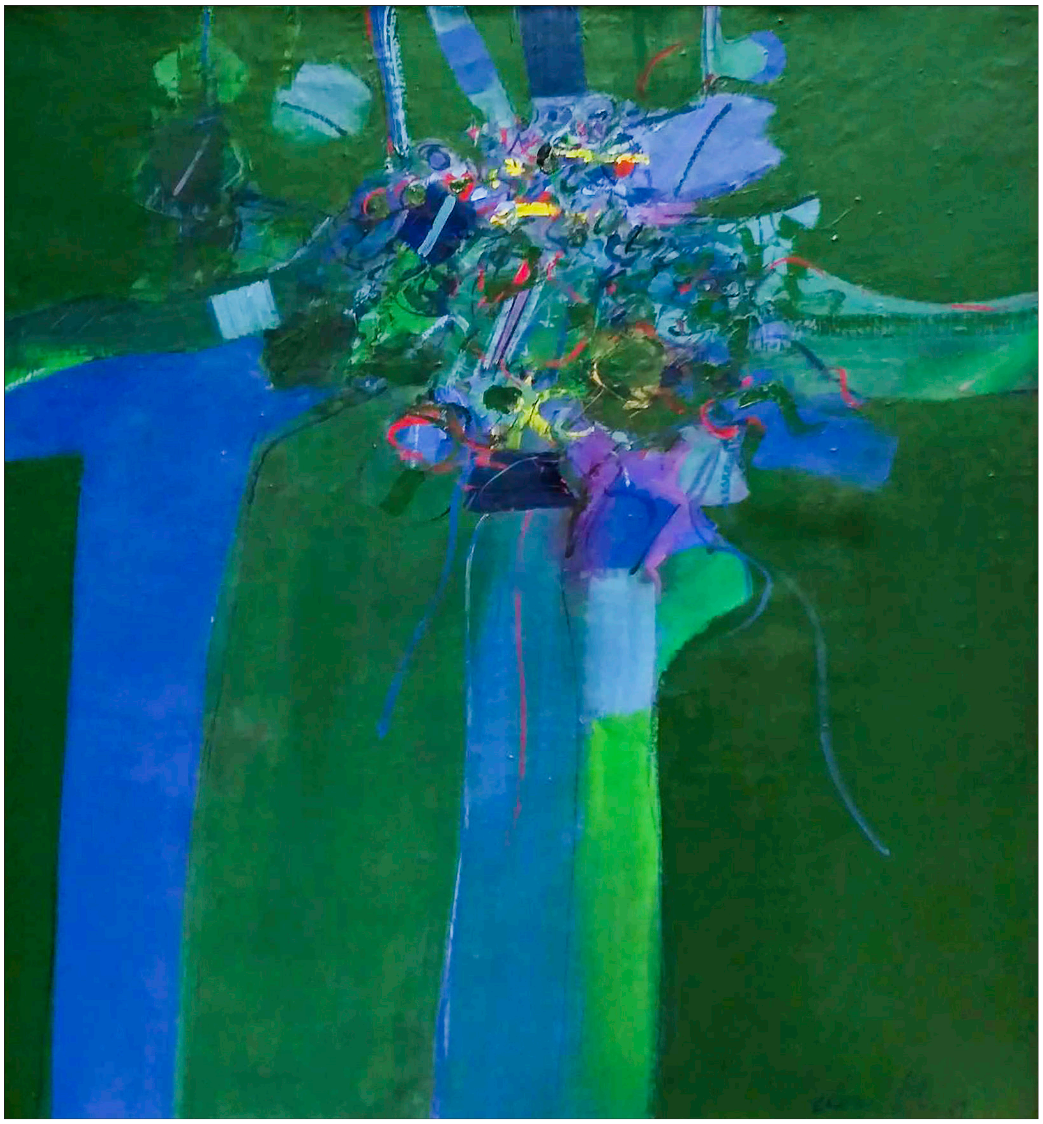
The Opening

1966. Acrylic on canvas, 17 x 12.75 in.
Collection of Kristin and Greg Janisch.



Untitled

1966. Acrylic on canvas, 17 x 16.75 in.
Collection of Kristin and Greg Janisch.

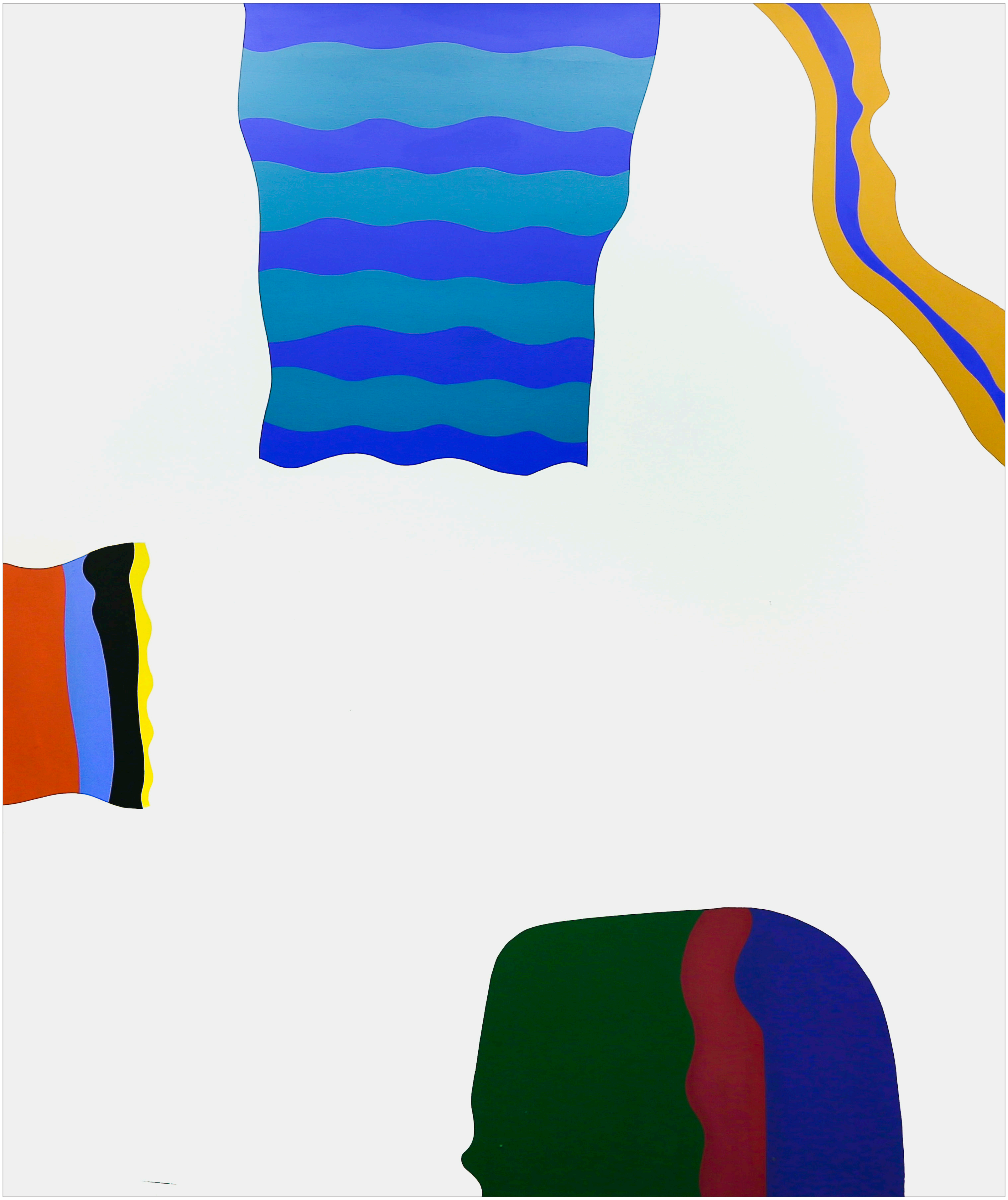


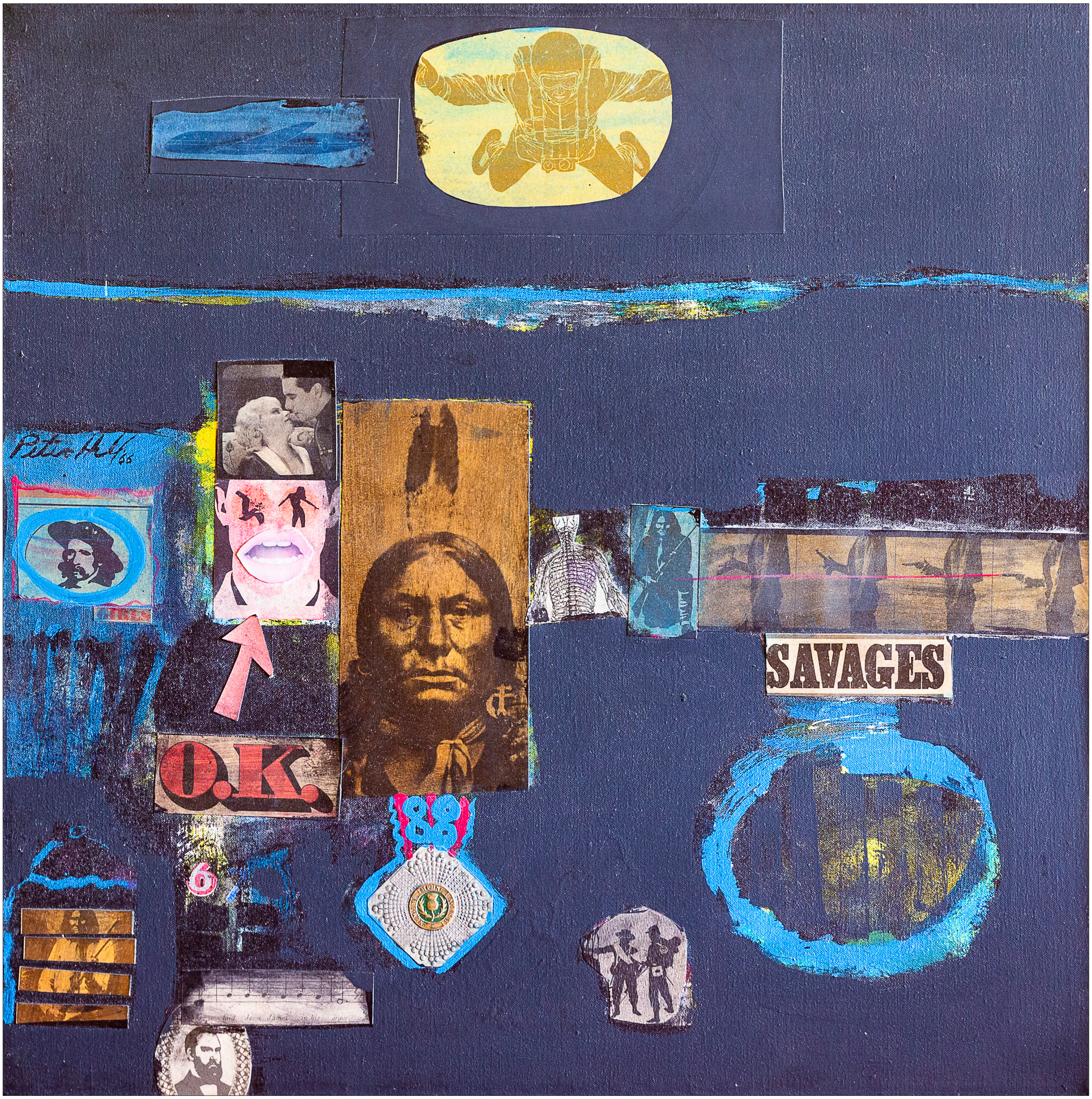
Telemann (above)

1966. Acrylic on canvas, 39 x 36 in.
Collection of the Springfield Art Museum, Missouri.
Photograph courtesy of the museum.

White (opposite)

1966. Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 61.5 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



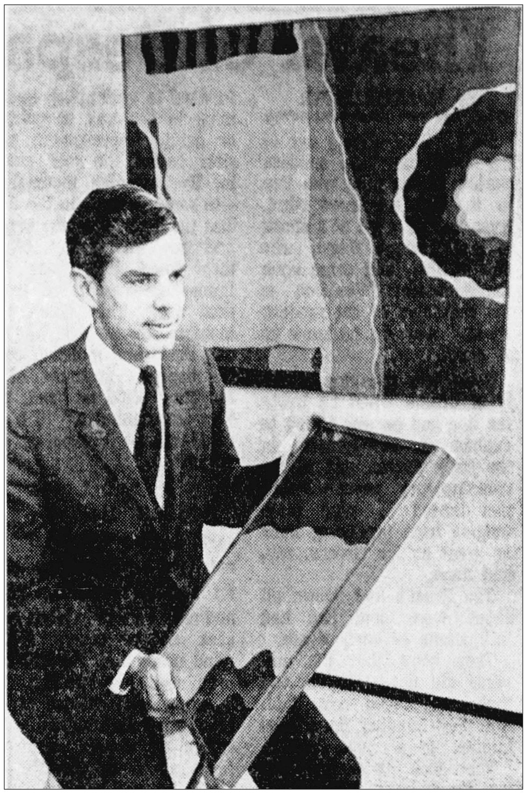


Centennial

1966. Mixed media on canvas, 20 x 20 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman. Canada.

Fort Worth Star-Telegram, April 30, 1967

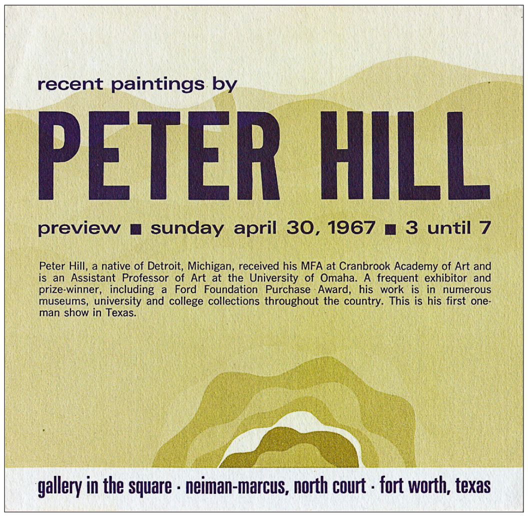
Gallery to Show Work of Art Prof



SHOW TO OPEN—Ed Hudson Jr. Holds "Break," a painting by Peter Hill, whose work will be shown at Gallery-in-the-Square starting Sunday. On the wall is "Red & Orange."

Gallery-in-the-Square, an art gallery that is adventurous as any in the area in exposing the work of new and different talents to Fort Worth, Sunday opens a preview of the talented Peter Hill, assistant professor of art at the University of Omaha.

A native of Detroit, Hill received his MFA at Cranbrook Academy of Art. He is a frequent exhibitor and prize-winner, including a Ford Foundation Purchase Award, and his work is in numerous museums and university and college collections throughout the country. This is his first one-man show in Texas.



recent paintings by

PETER HILL

preview ■ sunday april 30, 1967 ■ 3 until 7

Peter Hill, a native of Detroit, Michigan, received his MFA at Cranbrook Academy of Art and is an Assistant Professor of Art at the University of Omaha. A frequent exhibitor and prize-winner, including a Ford Foundation Purchase Award, his work is in numerous museums, university and college collections throughout the country. This is his first one-man show in Texas.

gallery in the square · neiman-marcus, north court · fort worth, texas

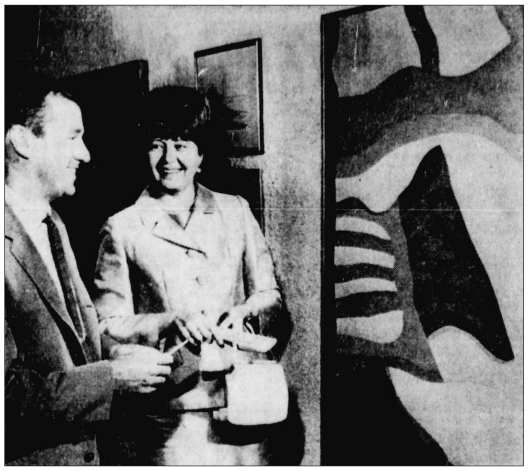
These paintings are painted in acrylic paints, and Hill uses the bright, strong colors available to full advantage. The work itself is hard-edge; the clean lines formed turn into masses of color that inevitably produce their own symbols.

Hill's abstract paintings are a type of work that is rarely seen in commercial galleries here, and demonstrates some of the directions into which contemporary painting is heading.

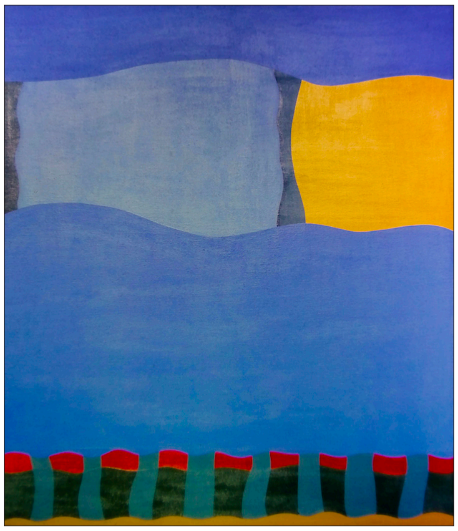
The canvases are not controversial, even though not all viewers will be able to "see" something in them; rather it is a well-painted work that we should see more of.

Lincoln Star-Journal, September 9, 1967

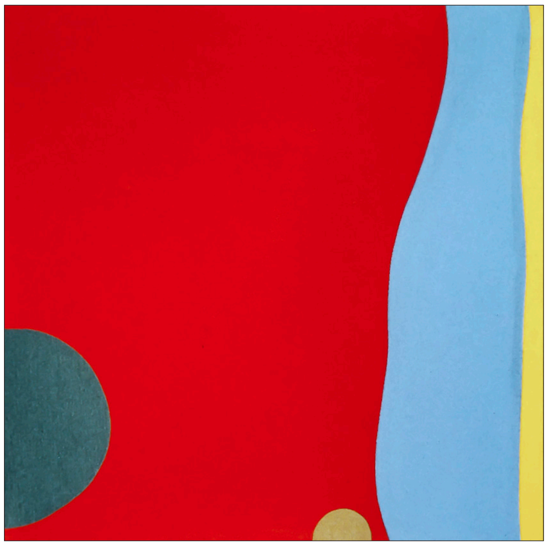
Award for Peter Hill's "Max"



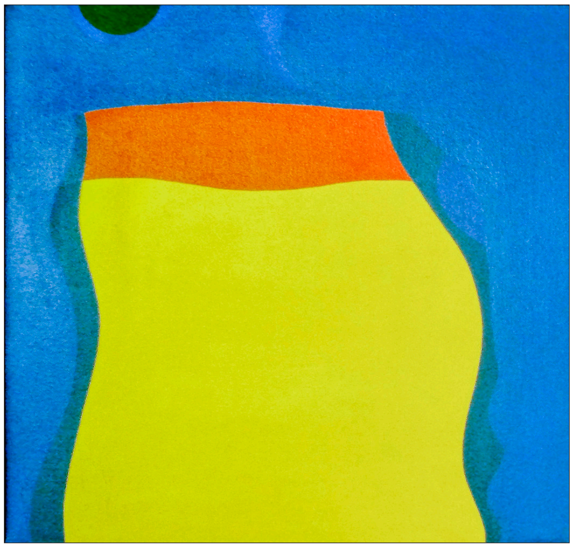
Nebraska's First Lady, Mrs. Norbert T. Tiemann, presents Peter Hill of Omaha with a $500 Sears Foundation purchase award at the Centennial Art Show which opened Friday at Nebraska Wesleyan's Elder Gallery. Hill's work [above] is an acrylic entitled "Max." He divided the $1,000 Sears purchase award with James Eisentrager of Lincoln who did an oil called "Dash." Tom Majeski of Omaha received the $200 Crossroads Merchants Association of Omaha purchase award and the Lincoln Artist Guild divided its $125 award between Tom Coleman of Lincoln and Gary Zaruba of Kearney.



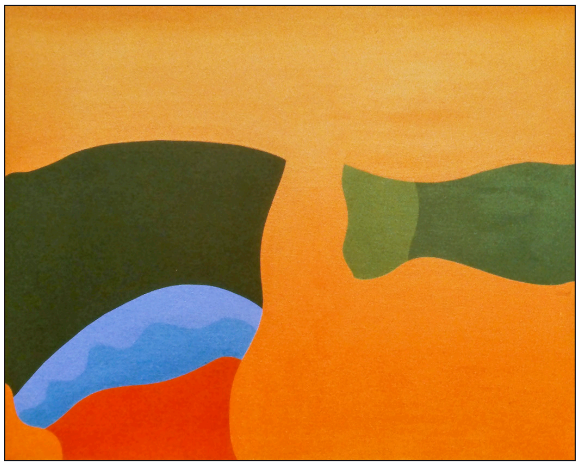
Garden, 1966. Acrylic on canvas.



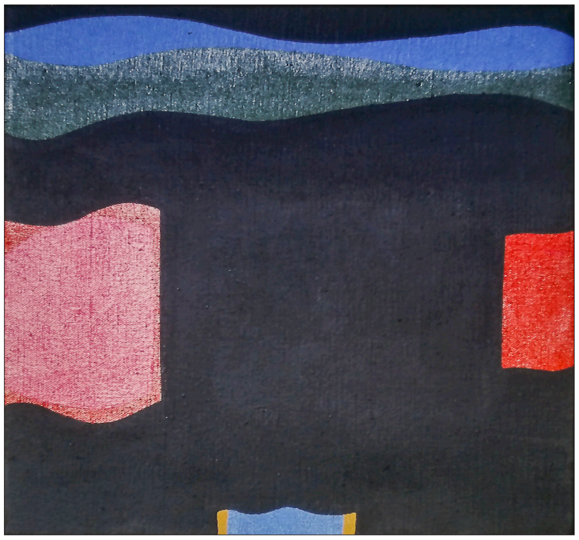
1966–7. Acrylic on canvas.



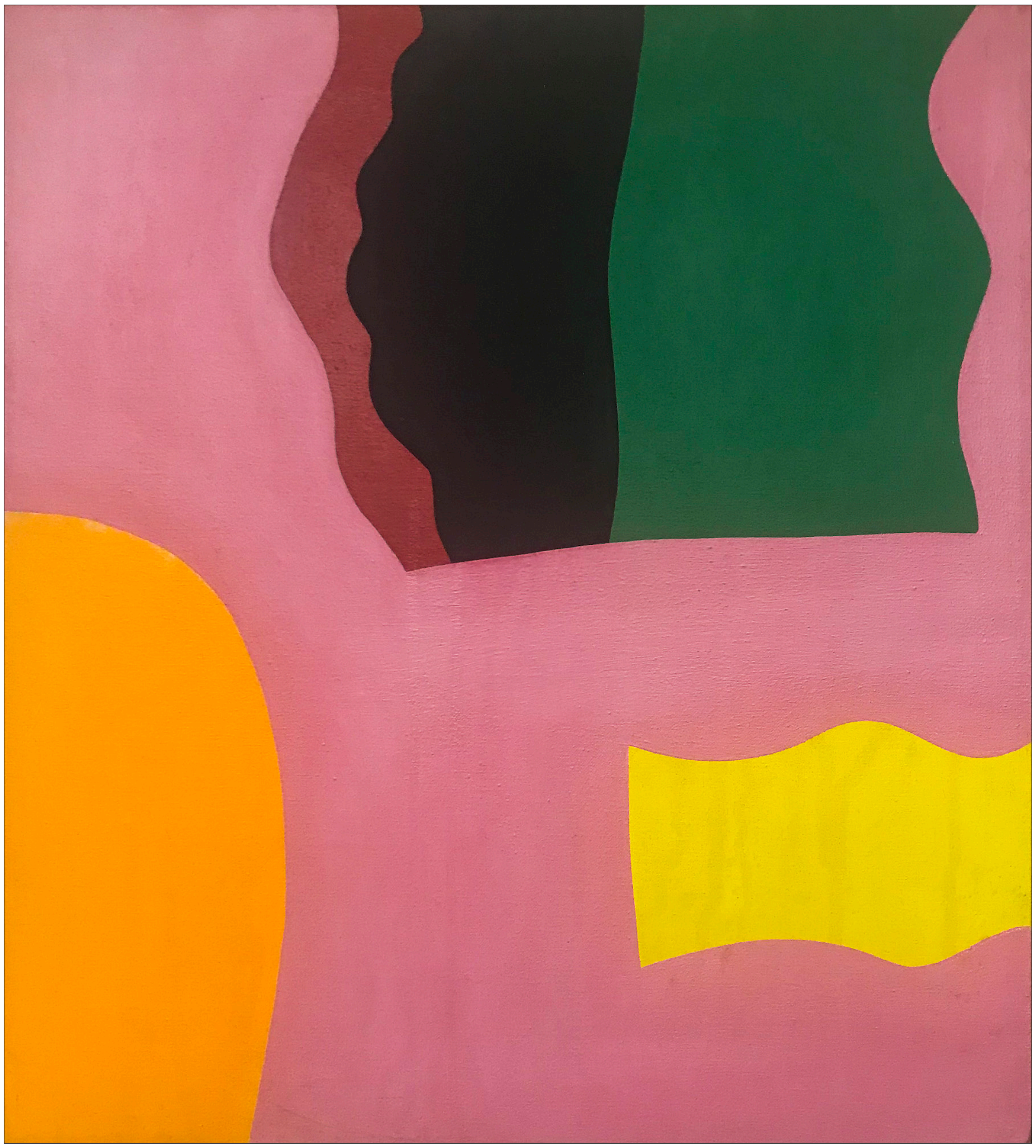
Pot, 1966–7. Acrylic, 19 x 19 in. Kutak Rock.



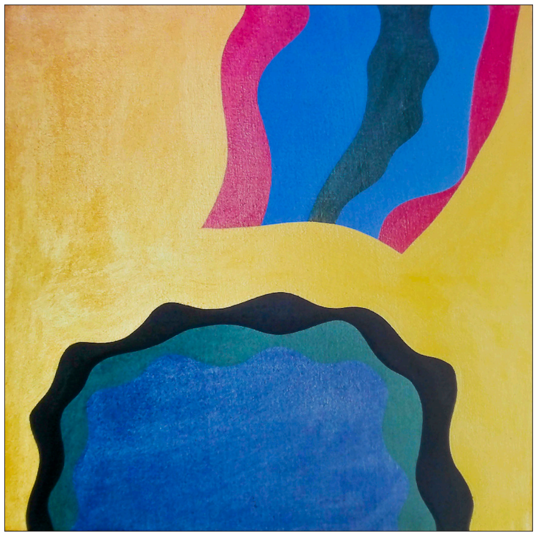
Prime, 1966–7. Acrylic, 37 x 29 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



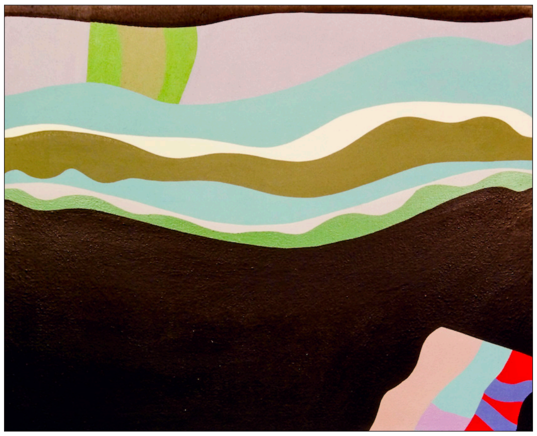
Opening, 1967. Acrylic on canvas.



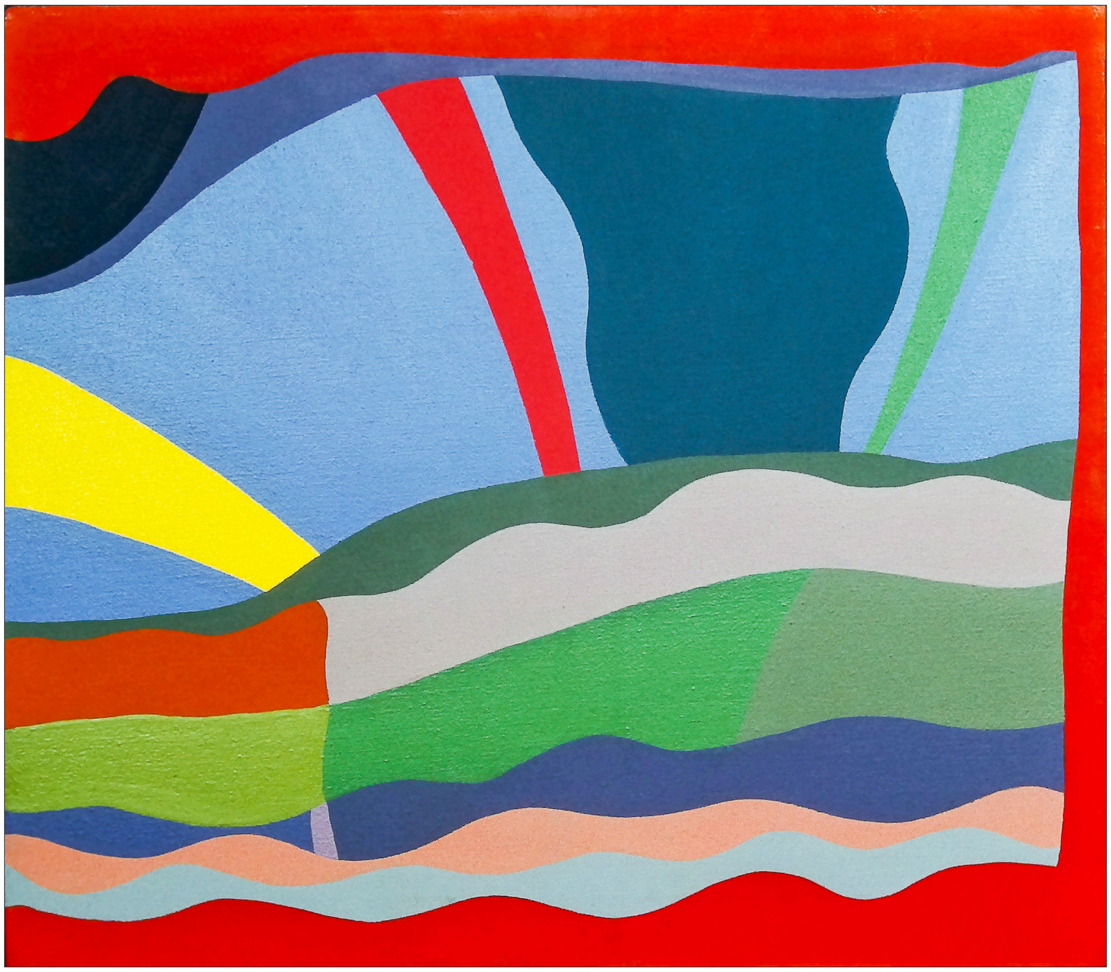
Three, 1966. Acrylic on canvas, 19 x 16.5 in. Collection of Kutak Rock.



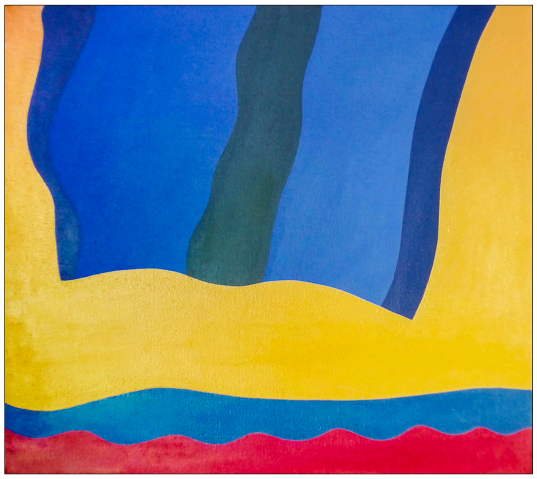
Flag, 1966. Acrylic on canvas.



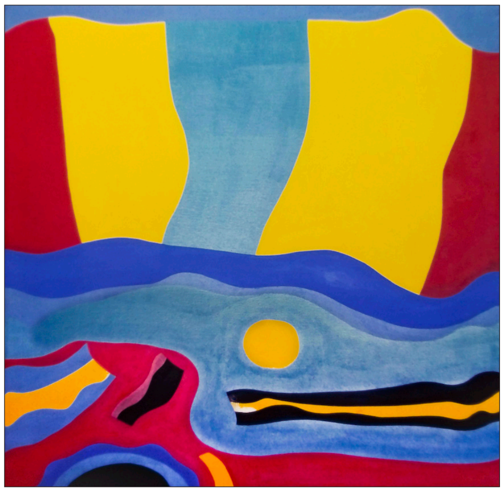
Flag I, 1966. Acrylic, 24 x 28 in.



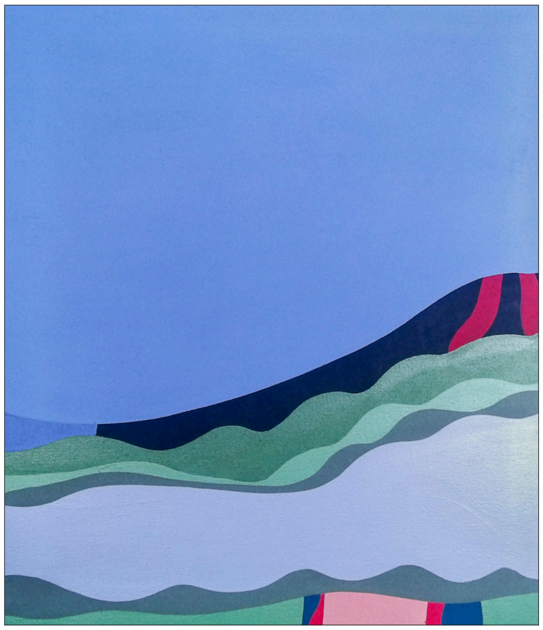
Flag II, 1966. Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 28 in.



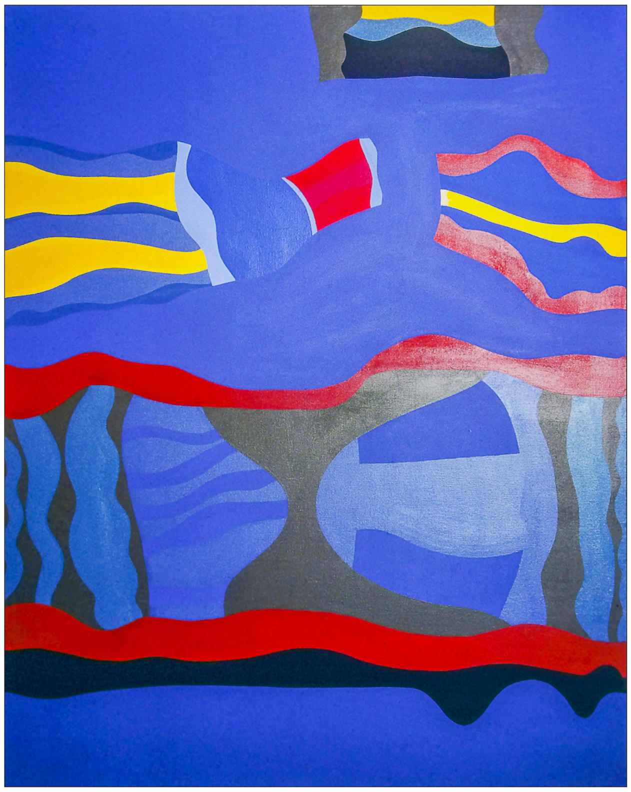
Flag III, 1966. Acrylic on canvas.



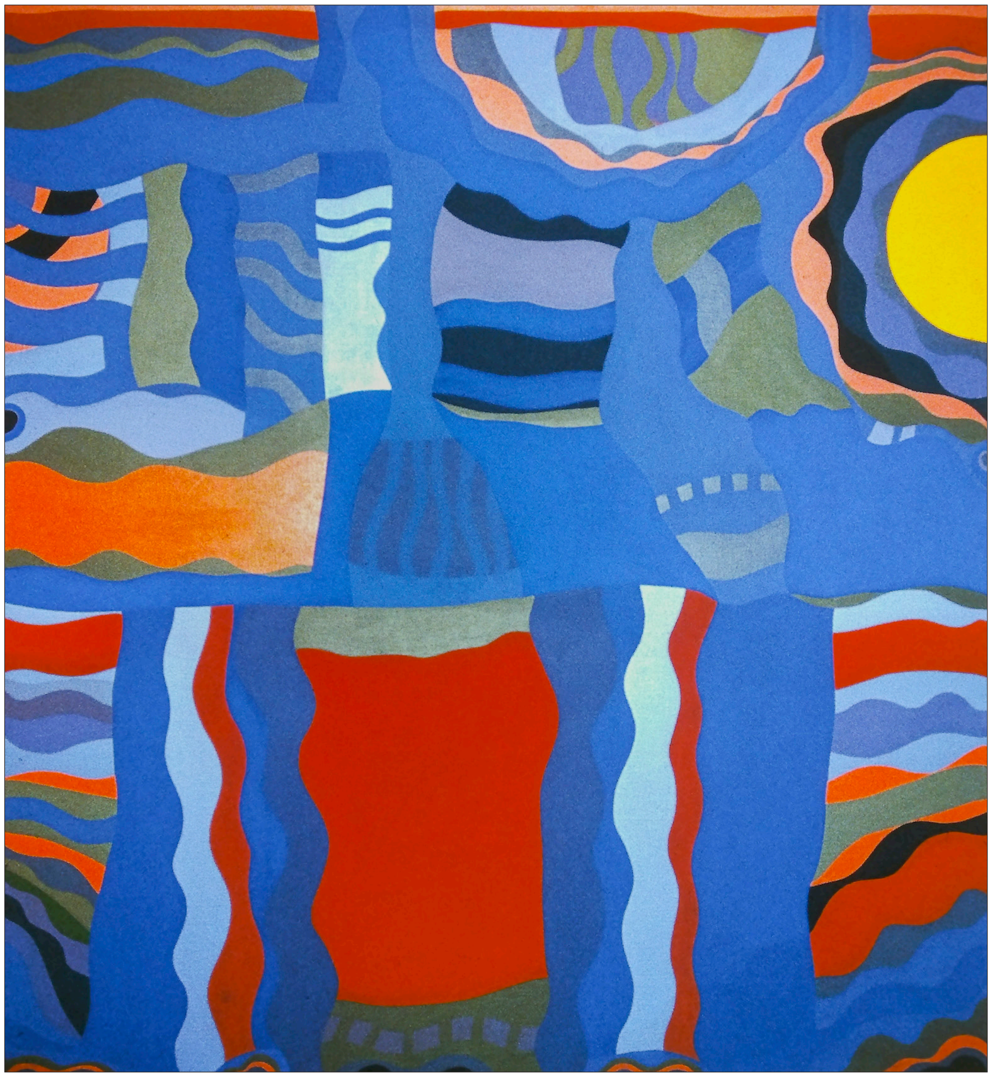
1966. Acrylic on canvas.



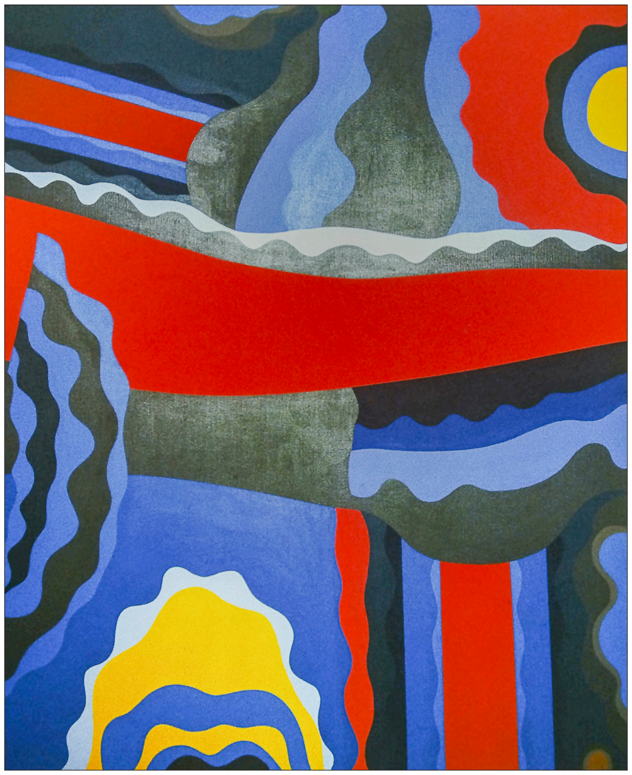
1966–8. Acrylic on canvas.



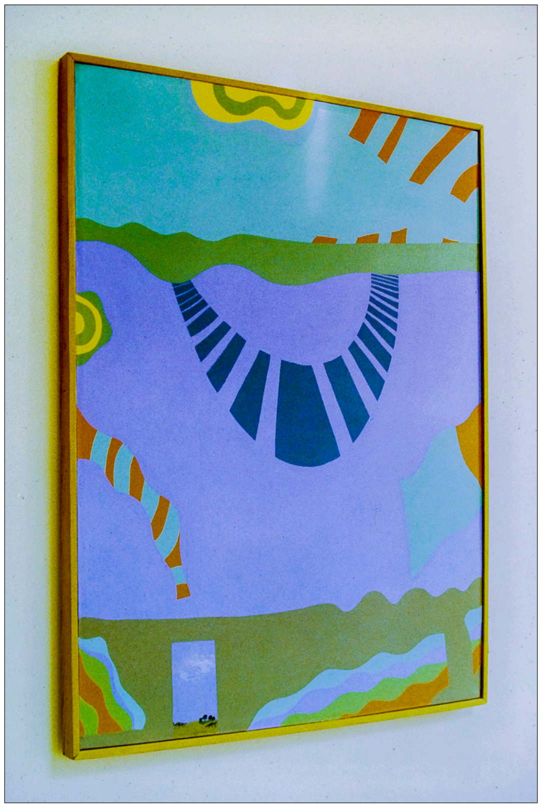
Docking, 1967. Acrylic on canvas, 53 x 43 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



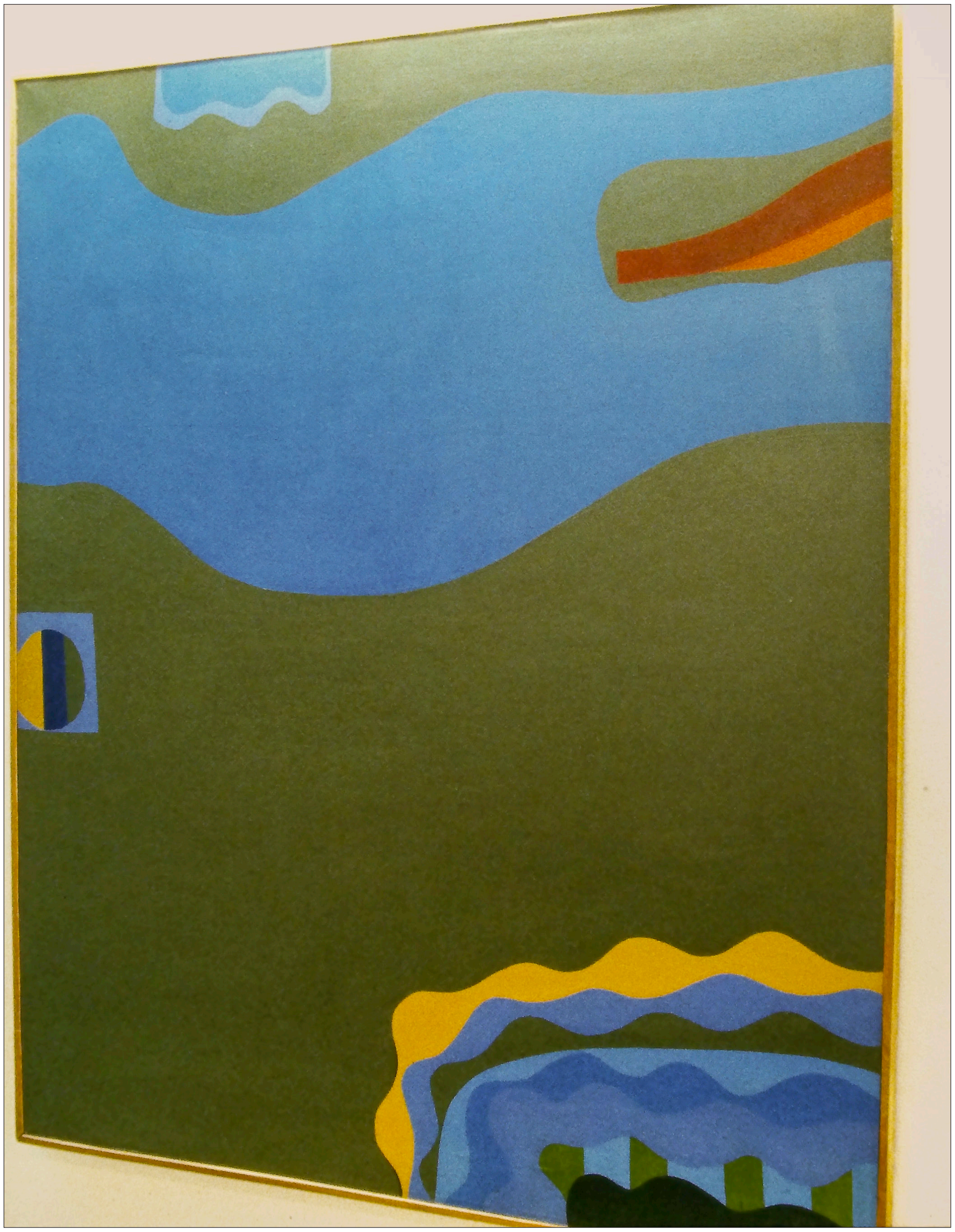
1966. Acrylic on canvas, 71 x 65 in. Collection of Kutak Rock.



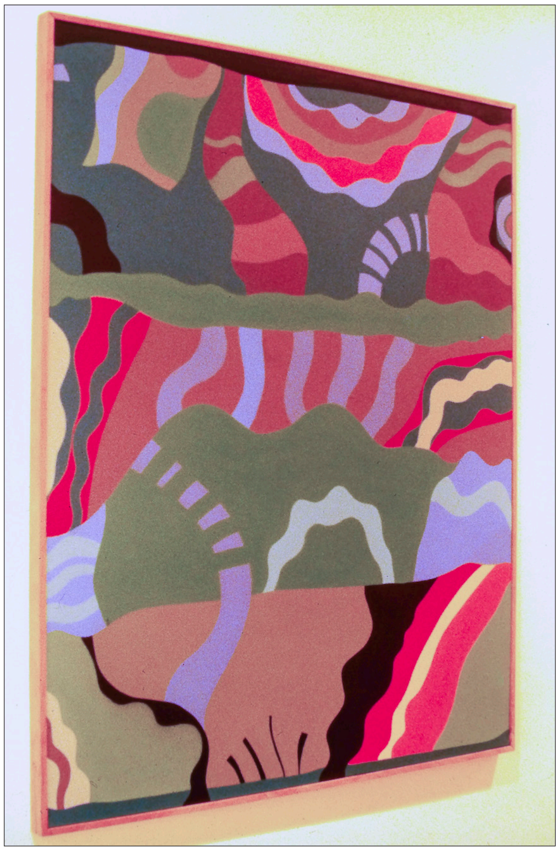
Leger, 1966. Acrylic on canvas, 67 x 55 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



Landscape, 1966–7. Acrylic on canvas, 41 x 32 in. Collection of Kutak Rock.



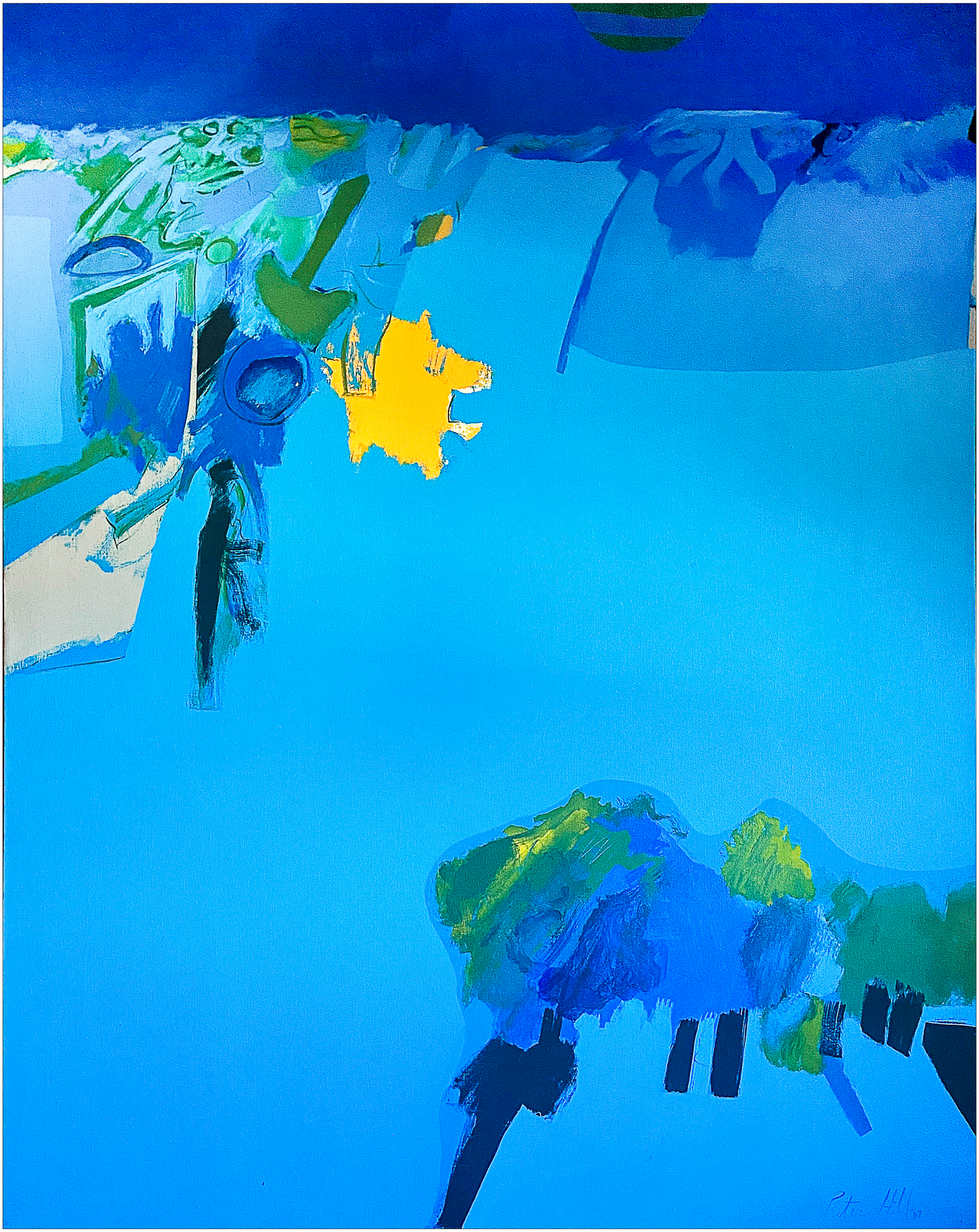
Untitled, 1966–7. Acrylic on canvas, 57 x 47 in. Collection of Kutak Rock.

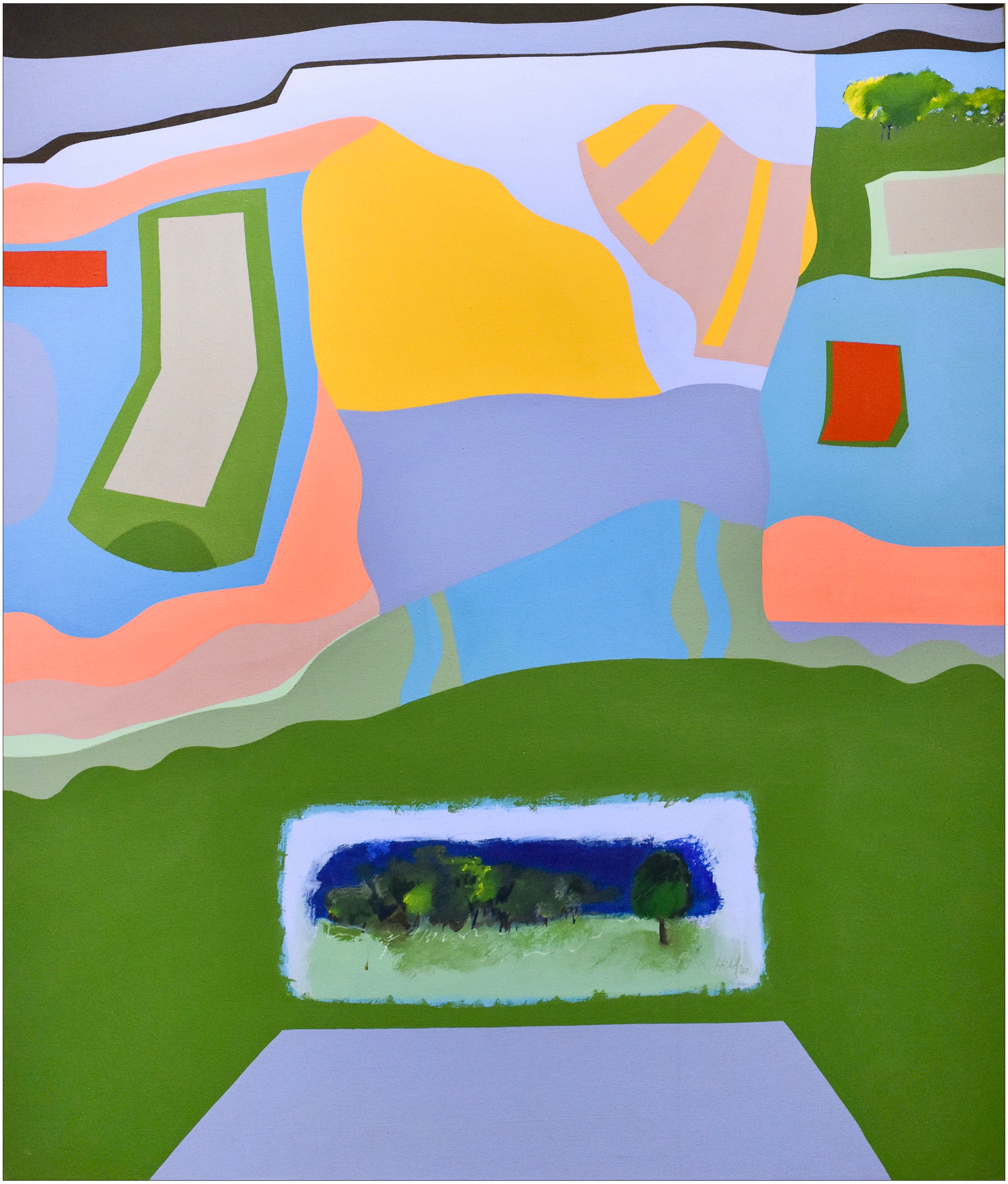


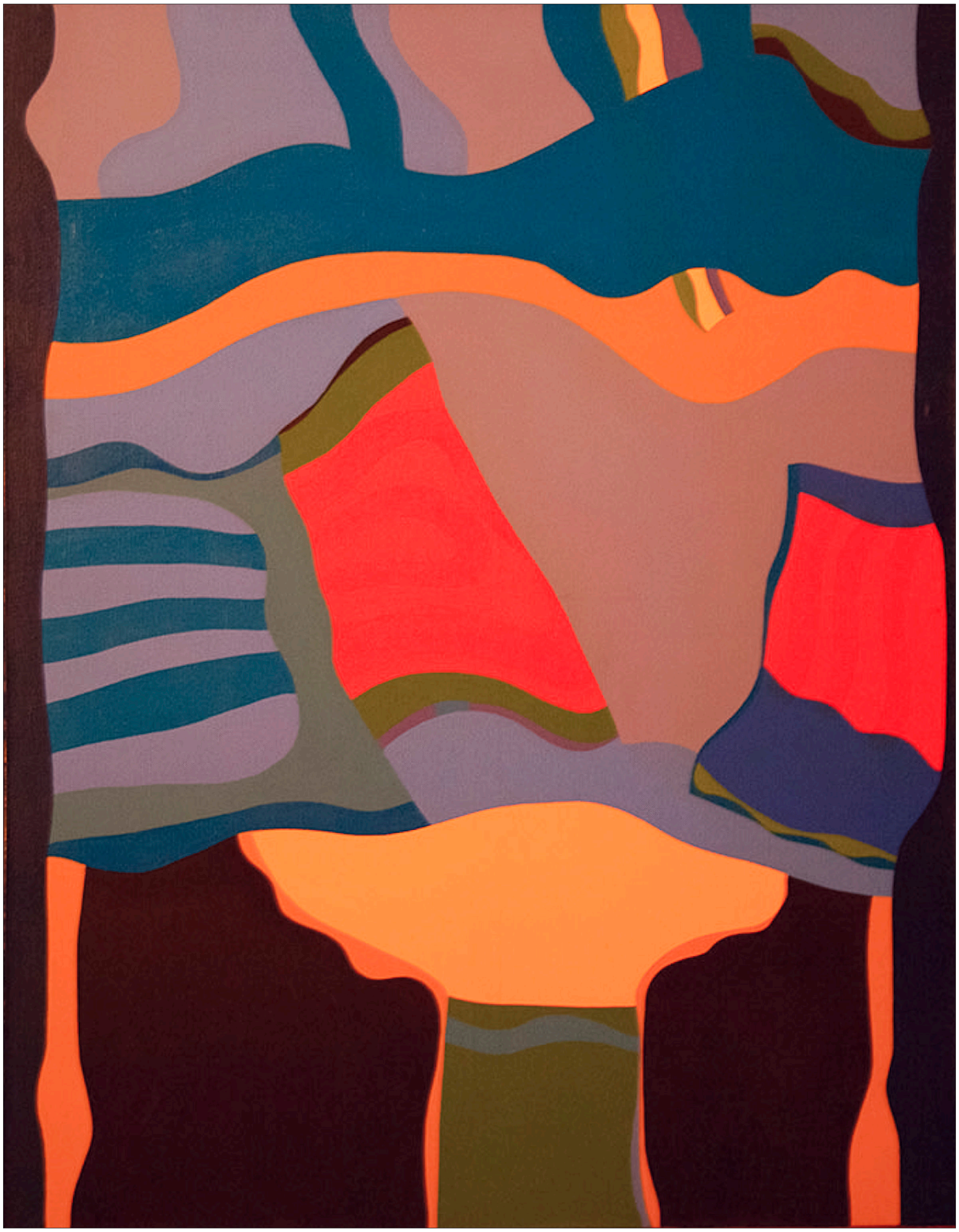
Three-Part Invention, 1968. Acrylic on canvas, 51 x 41 in. Collection of Kutak Rock.

Page 172:
Bluffs, 1967.
Acrylic on canvas, 51 x 44 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

Page 173:
Landscape, 1967.
Acrylic on canvas, 47.5 x 40.5 in.
Collection of the Sioux City Art Center.
Photograph courtesy of the museum.





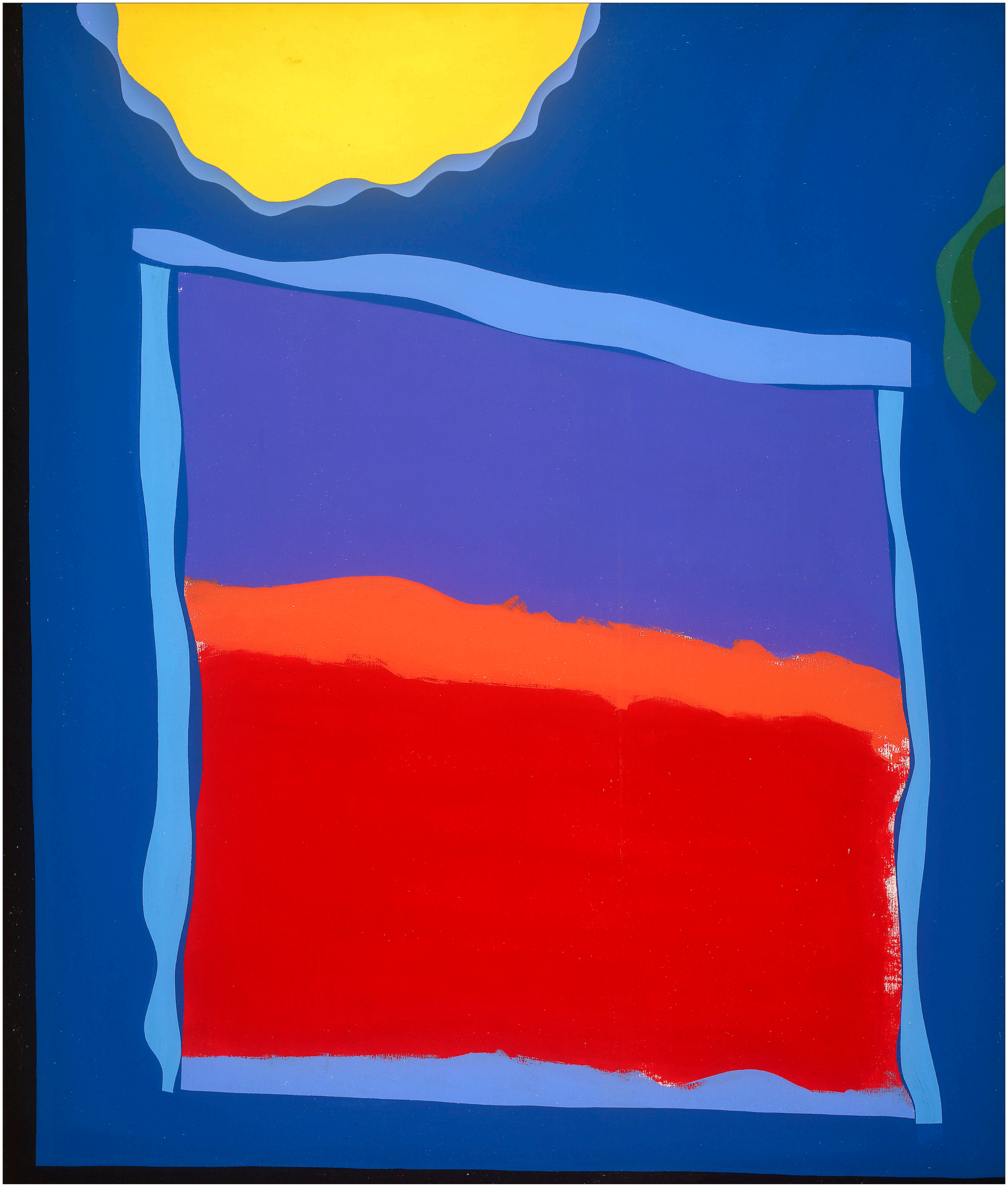


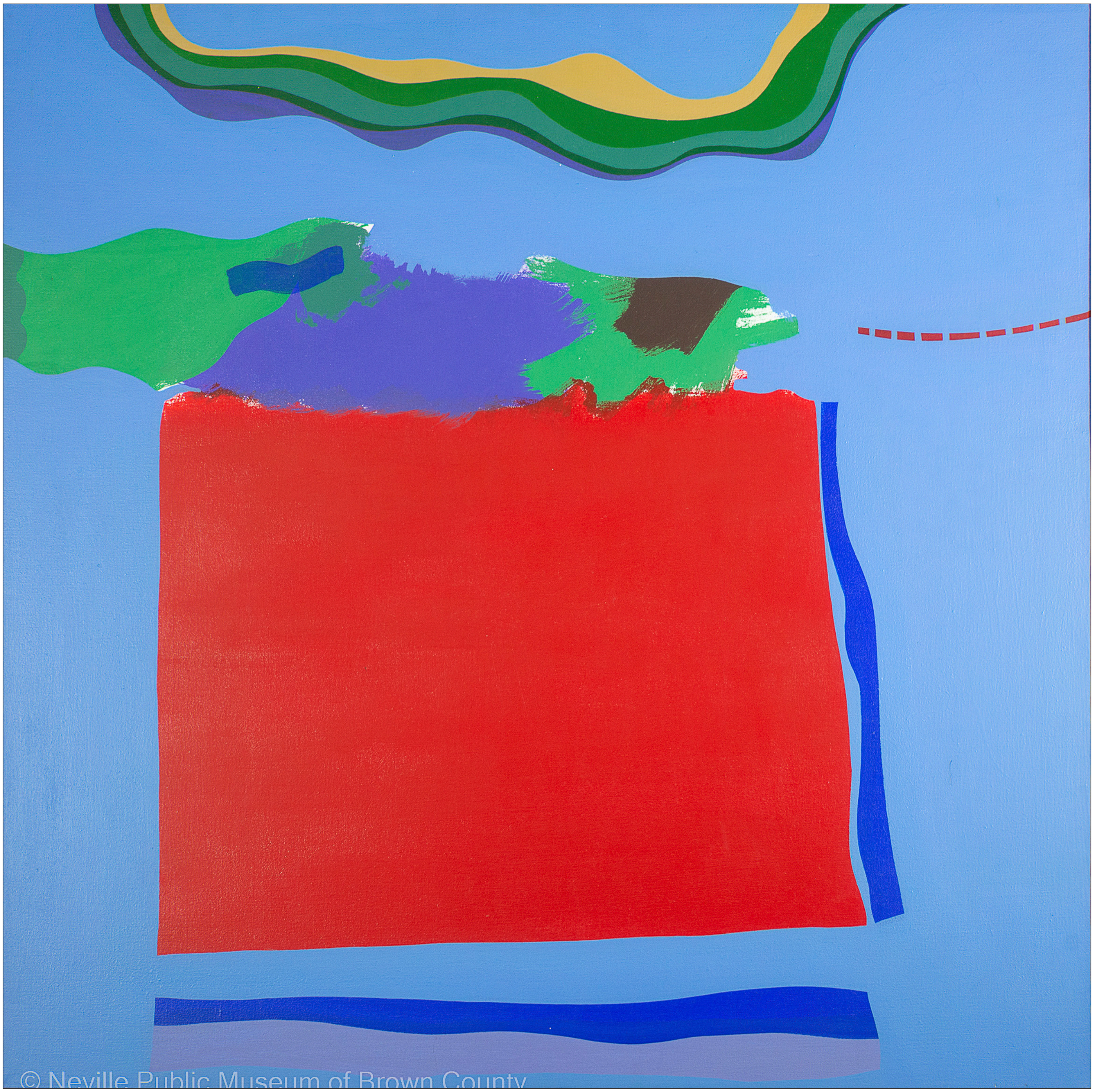
Max (above)

1967. Acrylic on canvas.
Collection of the Museum of Nebraska Art.

Flag (opposite)

1967. Acrylic on canvas, 58 x 48 in.
Collection of Antoinette Turnquist.

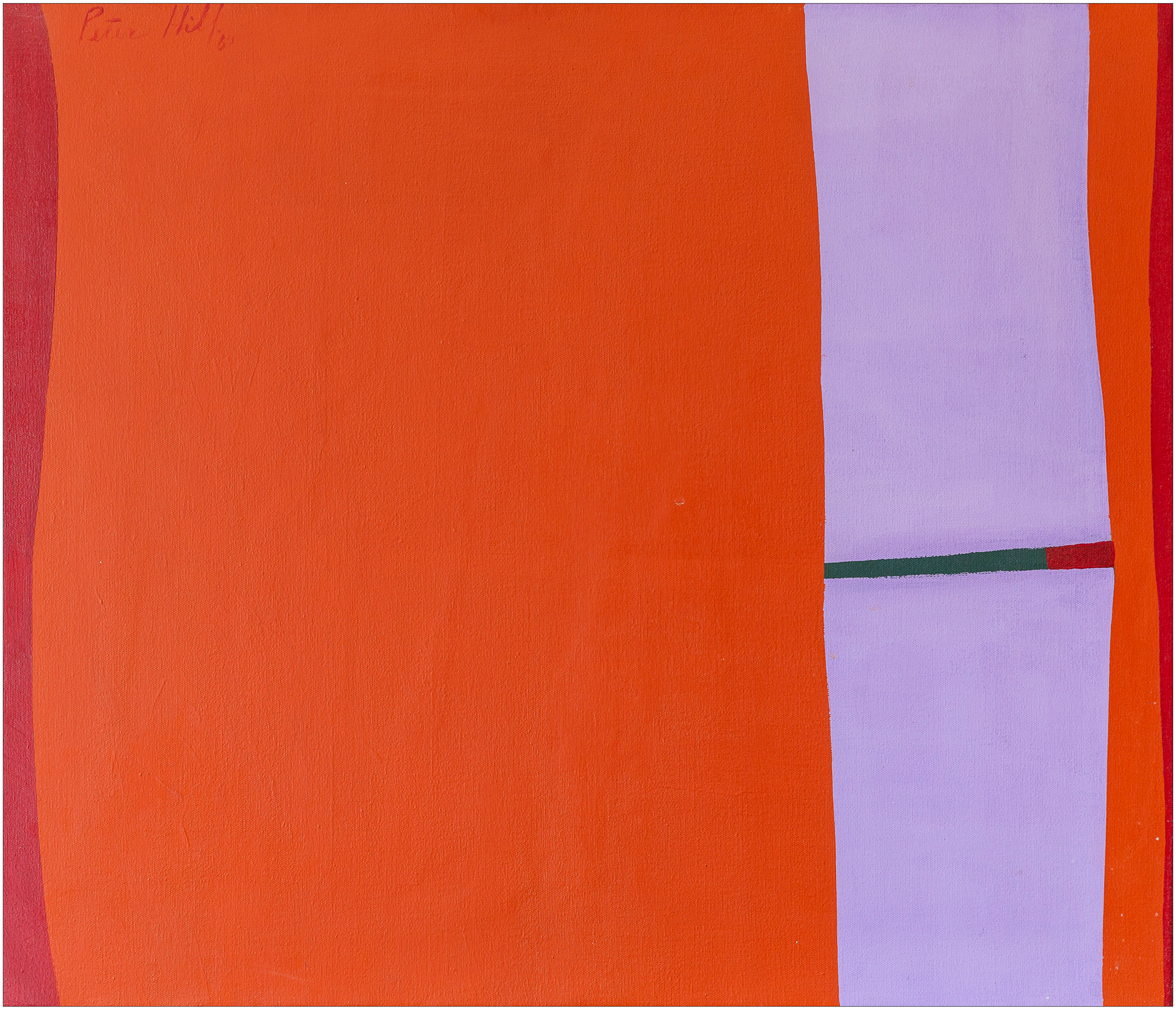




© Neville Public Museum of Brown County

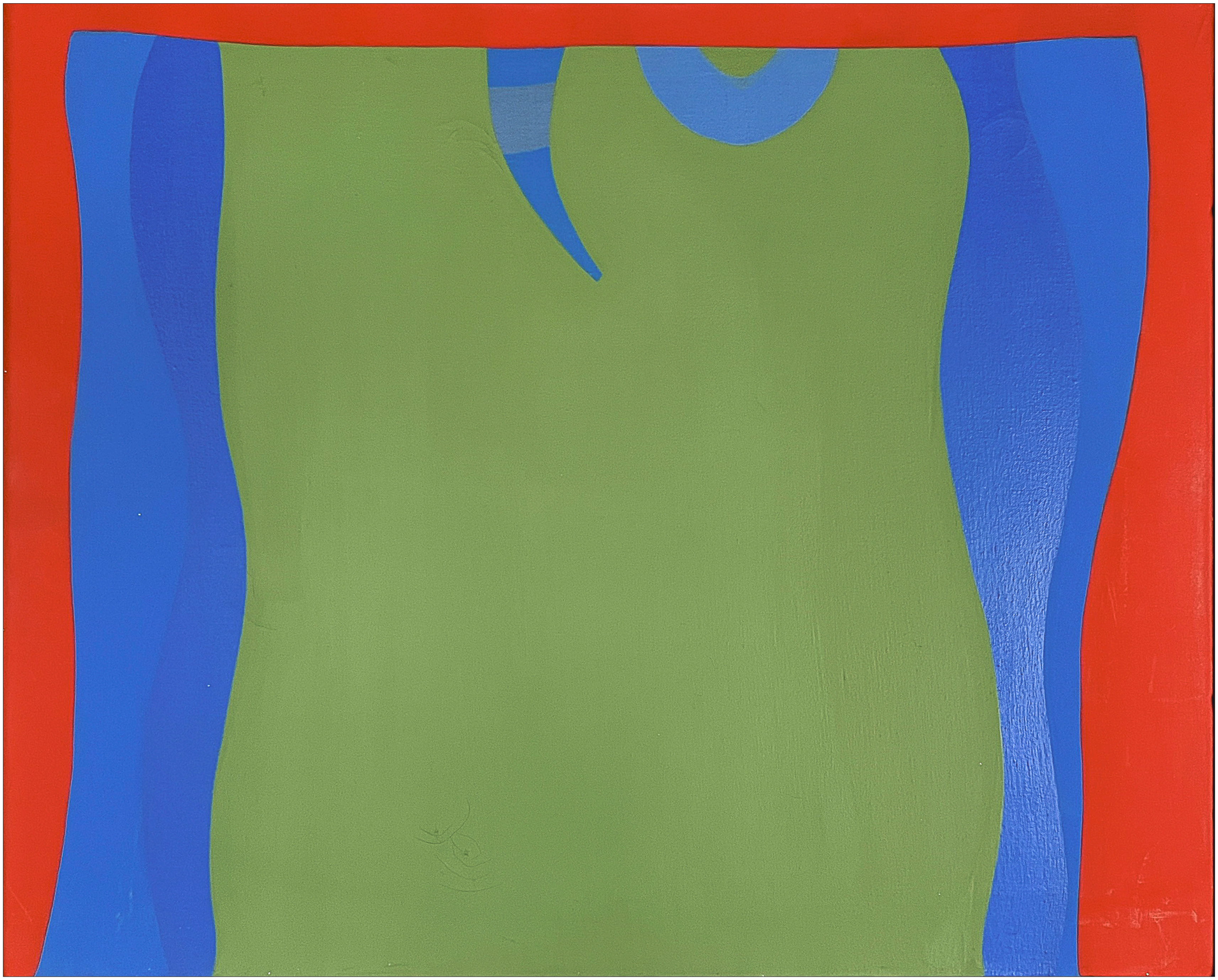
Force

1967. Acrylic on canvas.
Collection of the Neville Public Museum, Green Bay, Wisconsin.
Photo courtesy and copyright of the Neville Public Museum of Brown County, Wisconsin.



Untitled

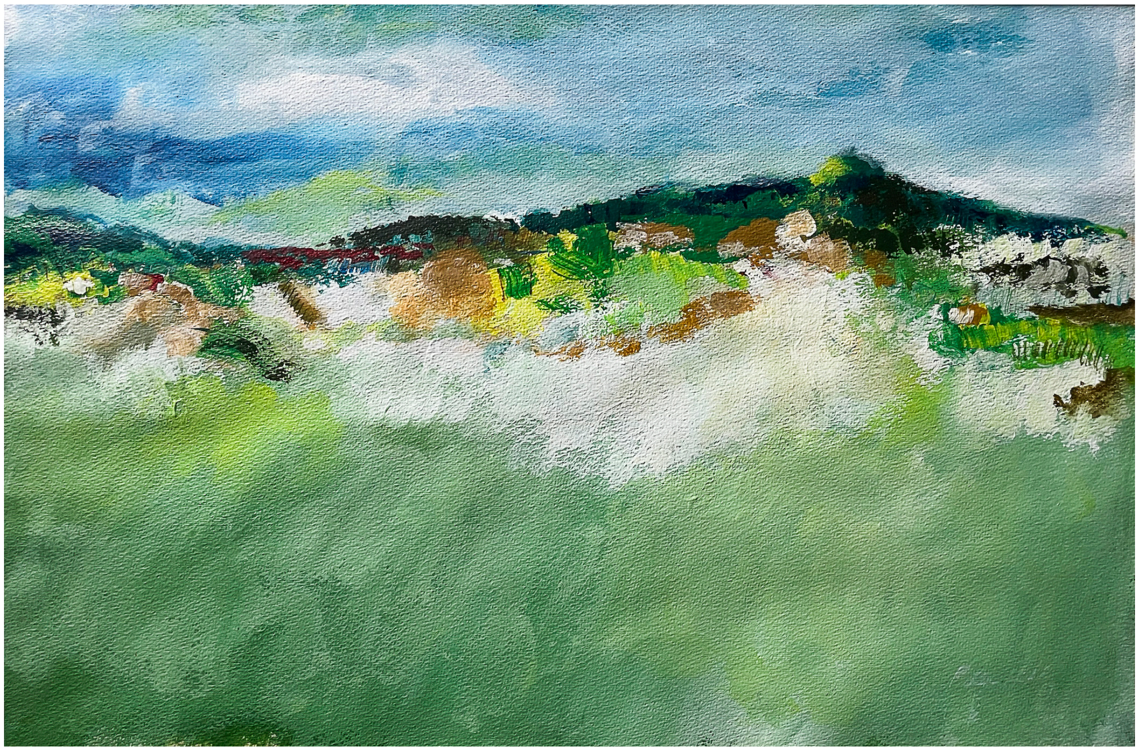
1967. Acrylic on canvas, 25 x 29 in.
Collection of Kristin and Greg Janisch.



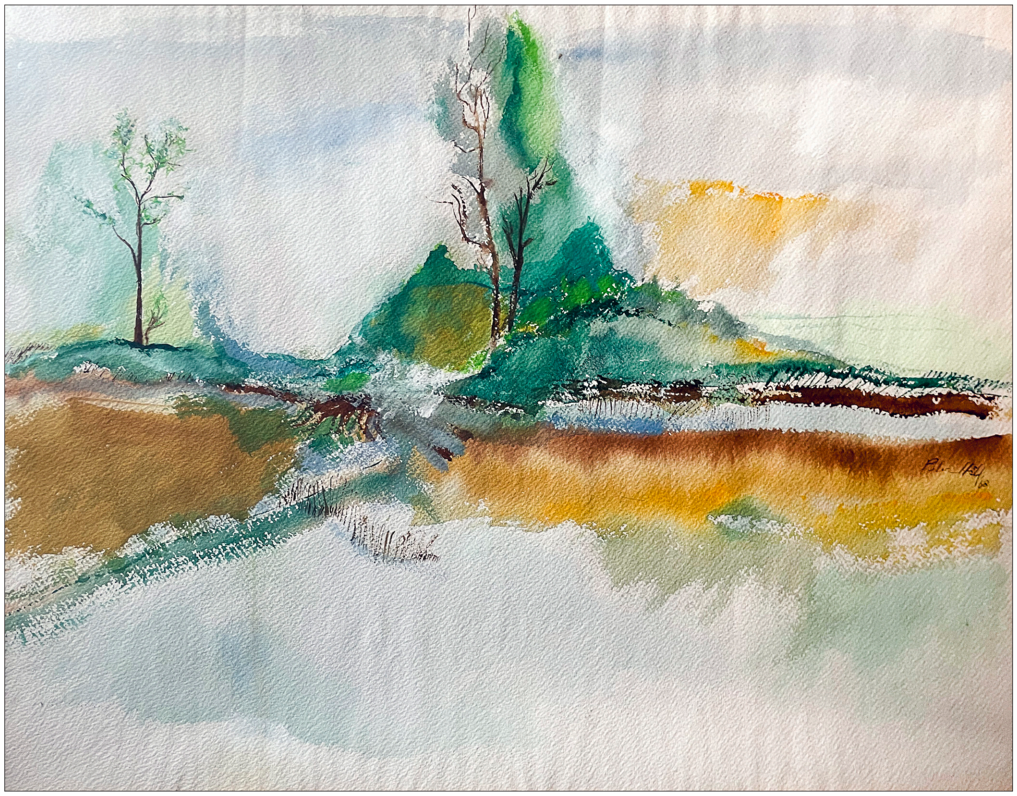
Tower

1967. Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 22.25 in.
Collection of the Waterloo Center for the Arts, Waterloo, IA.

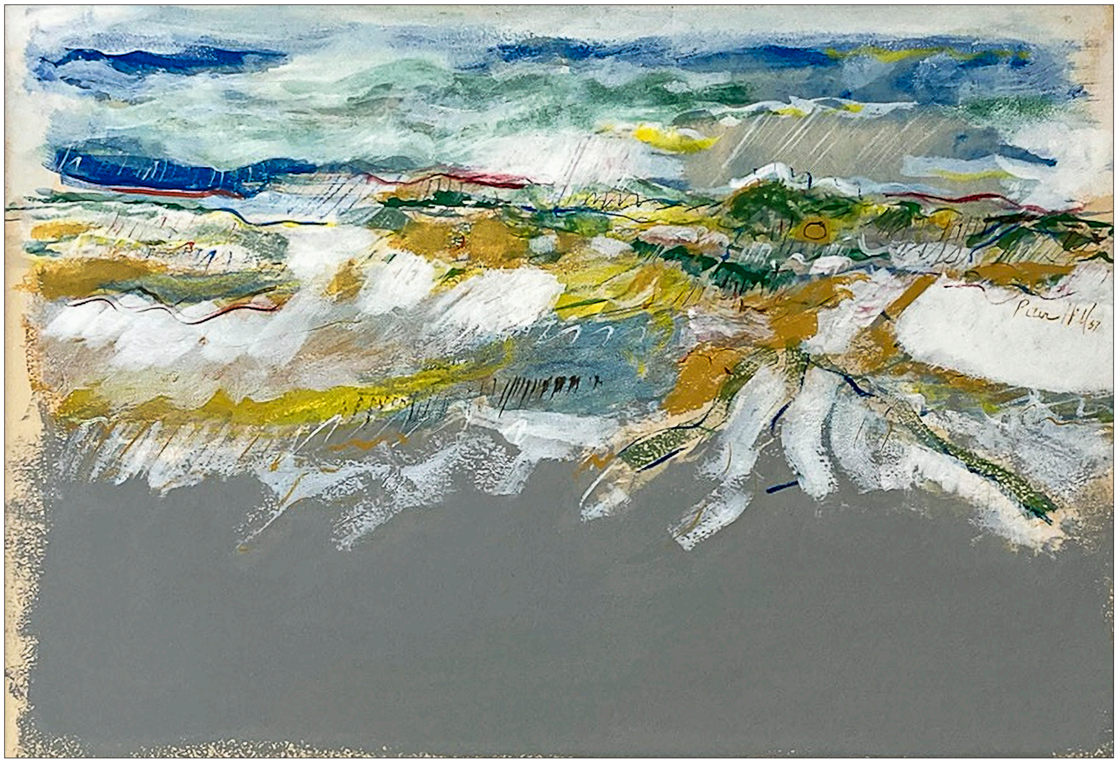
The following watercolors were in the collection of Gordon and Shirley Hansen. Gordon and Shirley were family friends; Gordon taught psychology at the university in Omaha and owned a cabin on Eagle Lake in Ontario, Canada, about 30 miles from my family's cabin on Edward Lake. Gordon died in 2024; Shirley moved and gifted the watercolors to Todd and Lindsey Freeman.



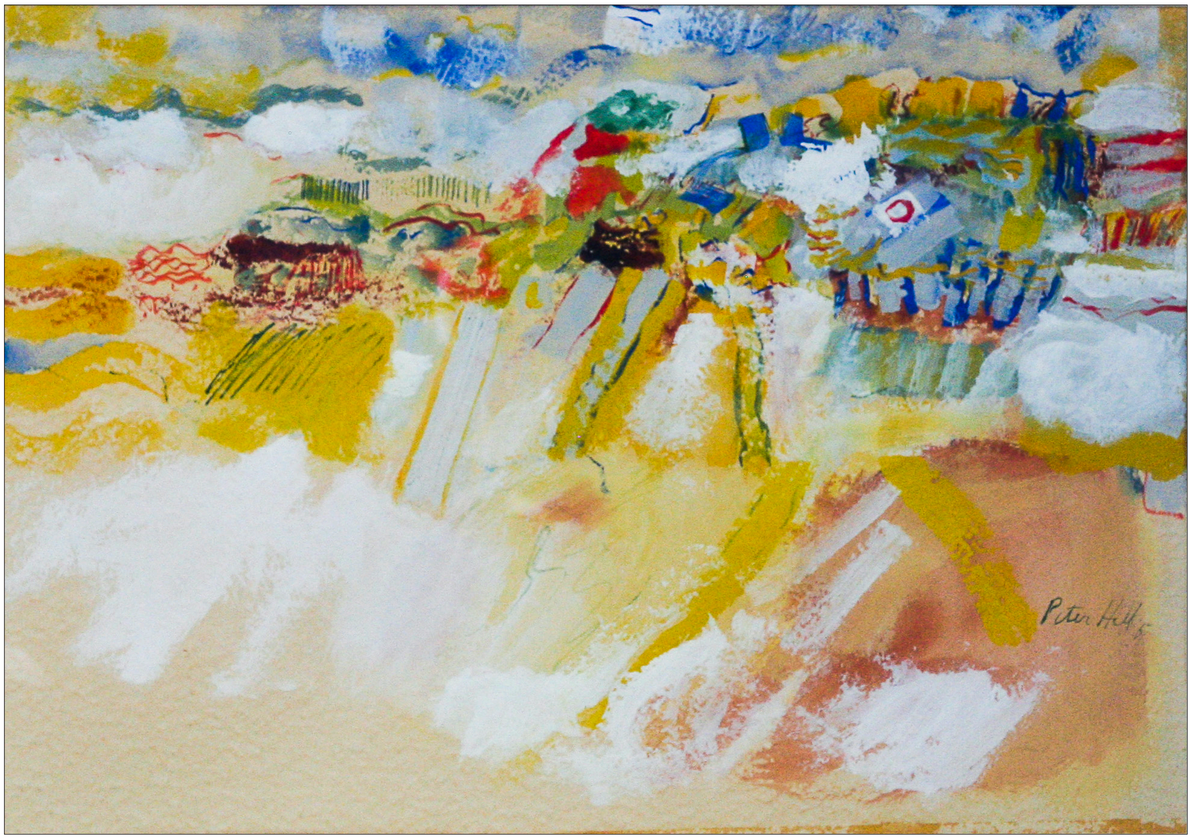
Untitled, 1967. Watercolor on paper.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.
Canada.



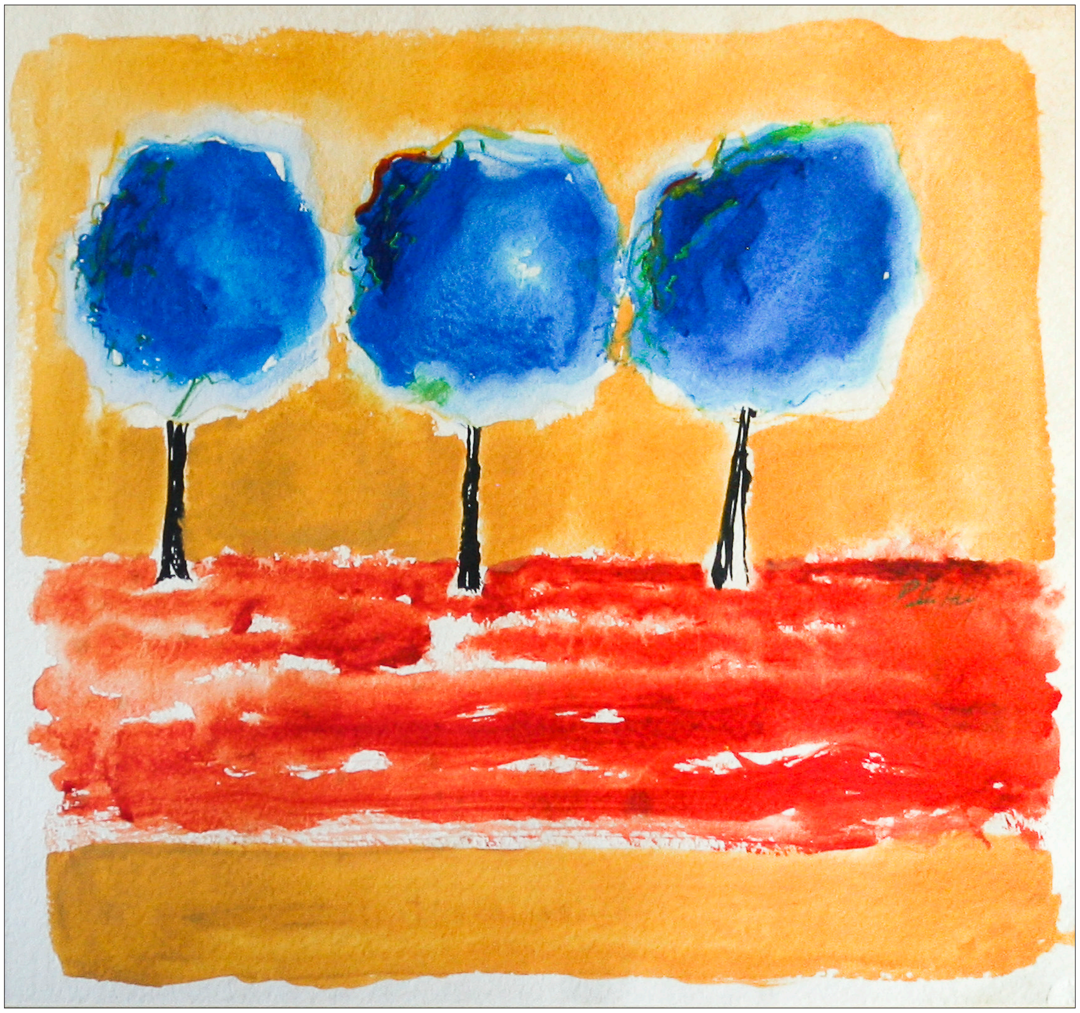
Untitled, 1968. Watercolor on paper.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman, Canada.



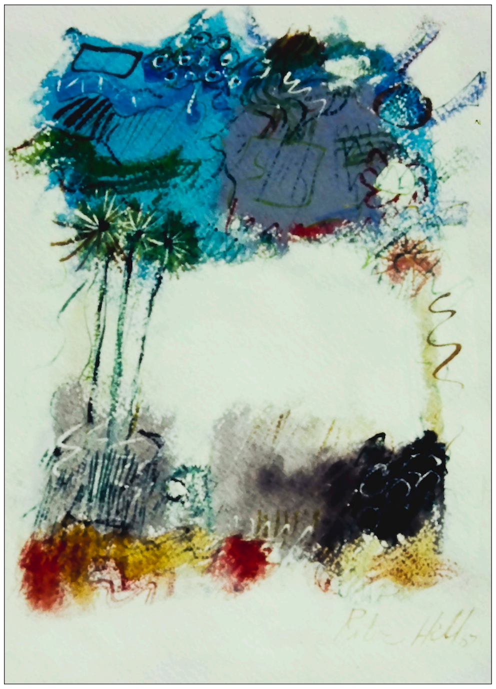
Thaw, 1967. Watercolor on paper.
Collection of the Spiva Center for the Arts.
Photograph courtesy of the museum.



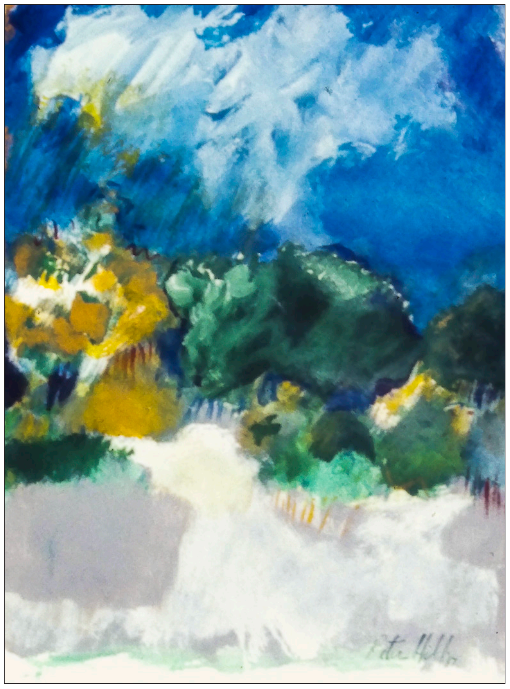
Untitled (*Spring*), 1967.
Watercolor on paper, 20 x 26 in.
Collection of Steve and Annette Huff.
Photograph by Alec Paul.



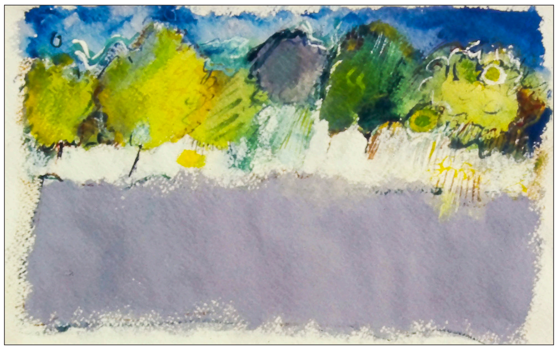
Three Trees, 1967.
Watercolor on paper, 25 x 26 in.
Collection of Steve and Annette Huff.
Photograph by Alec Paul.



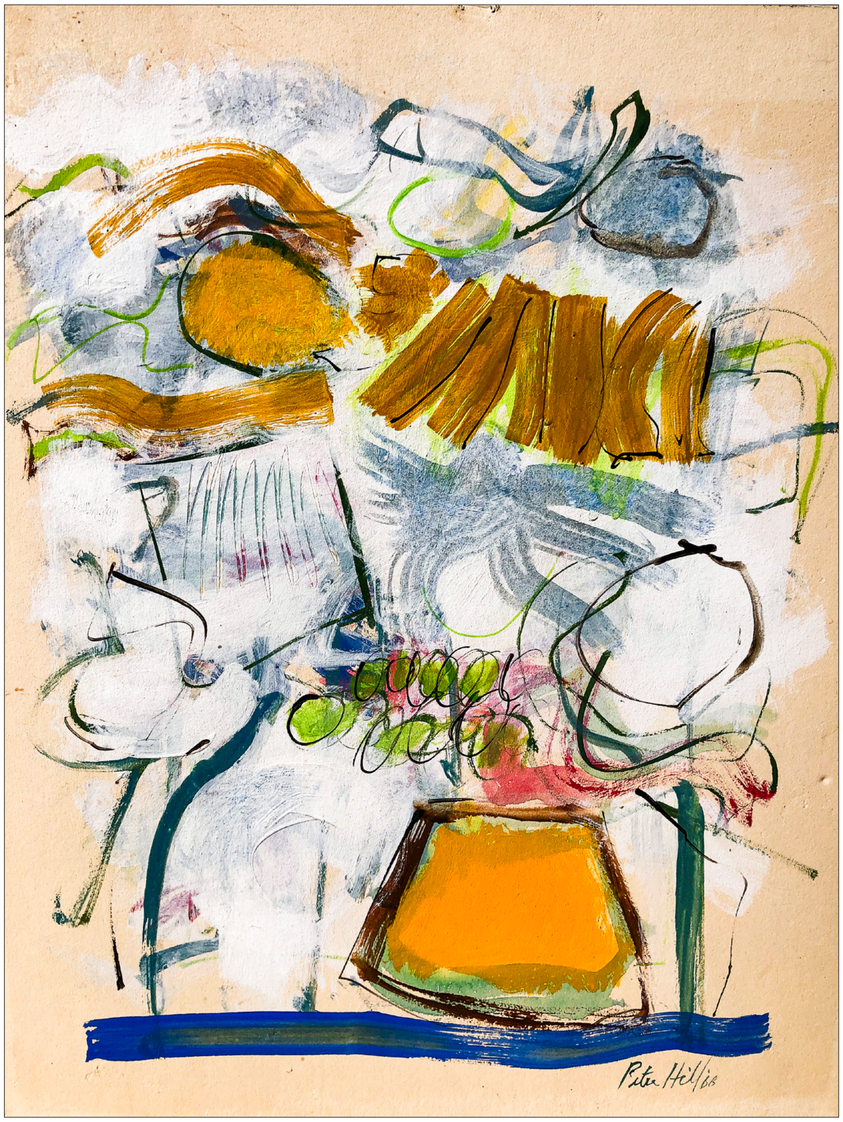
Untitled, 1967. Gouache on paper.



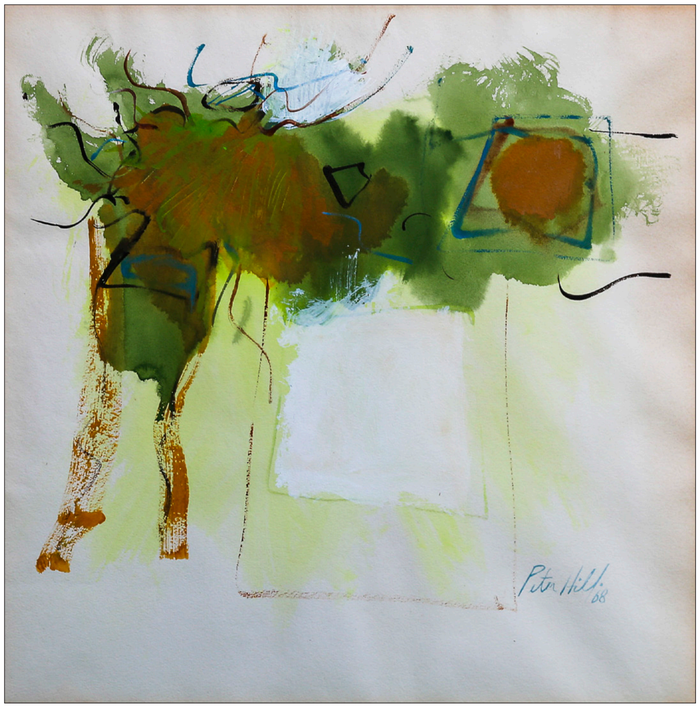
Landscape, 1967. Watercolor on paper.



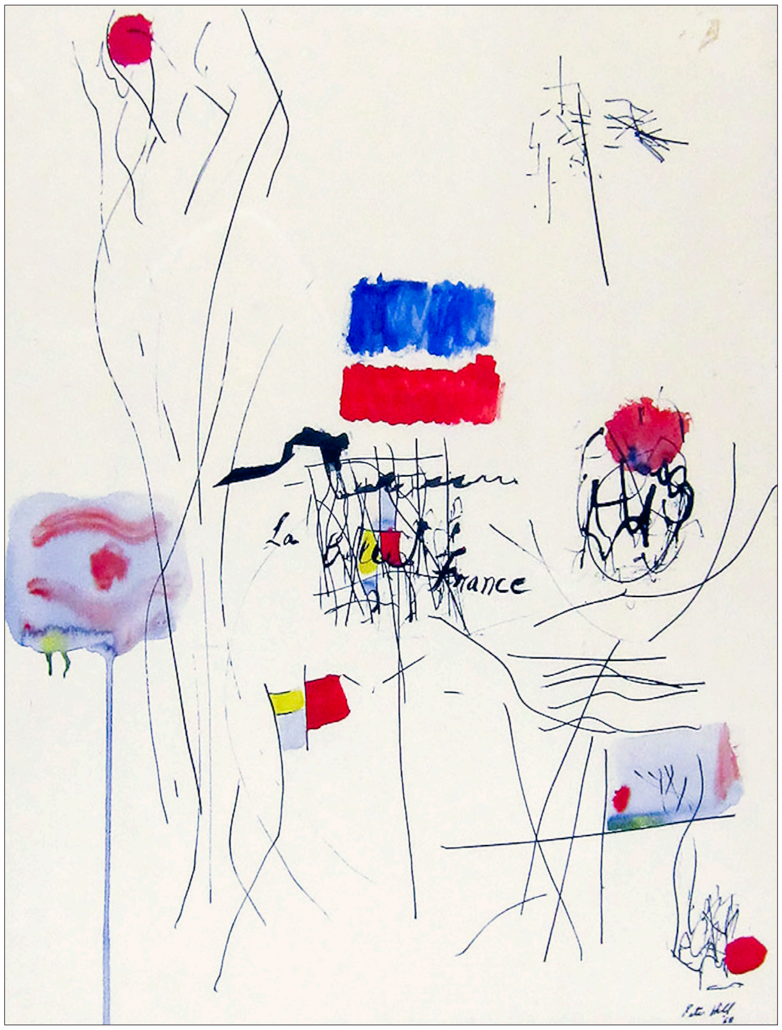
Landscape, 1967. Watercolor on paper.



Untitled, 1968. Watercolor on posterboard.
Collection of Deborah Vacek.



Untitled, 1968. Watercolor on paper, 13 x 13 in.
Collection of Meghan Freeman and Evan Porter.

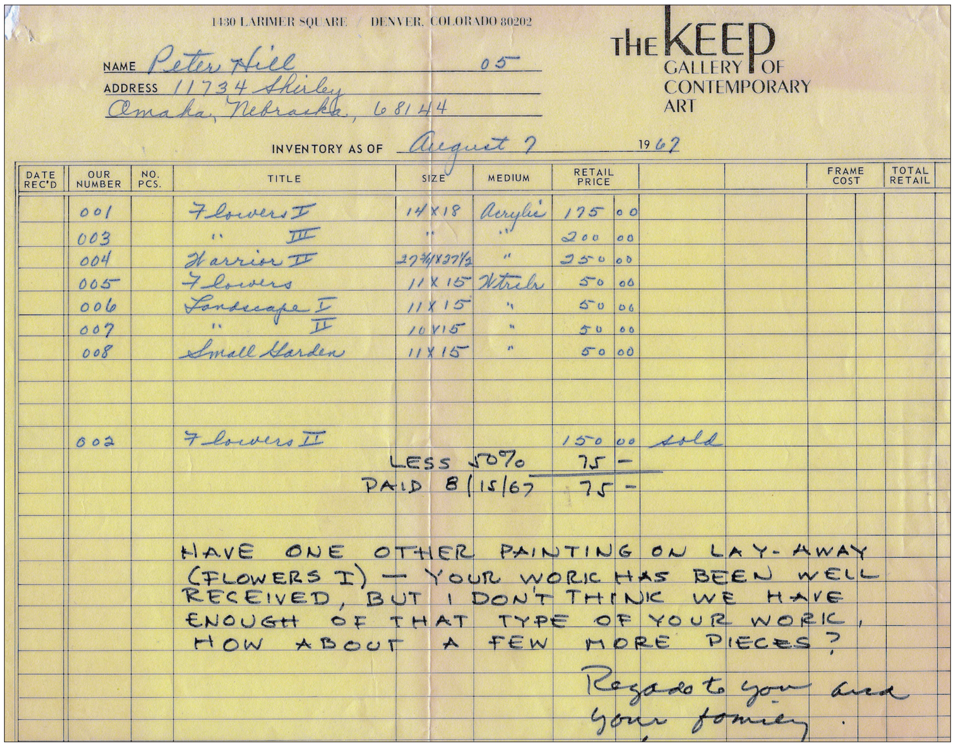


La Belle France, 1968.
Ink and watercolor on paper, 20.5 x 15.25 in.
Collection of the Museum of Nebraska Art.

Flowers: 1966 to 1973

Starting in 1966, my father started making small flower paintings. He'd explored painting flowers before (see right), but these new paintings were clearly part of an intermittent series. They were decorative and popular, with at least one gallery owner asking him to paint more (below).

He did not paint many of these. According to my mother, he thought they were too easy and pretty. My father wanted to make serious art, which for him was apparently predicated on a suspicion of simple beauty. Fortunately, we kept a few of these beauties in the family.



1430 LARIMER SQUARE / DENVER, COLORADO 80202

THE KEEP
GALLERY OF
CONTEMPORARY
ART

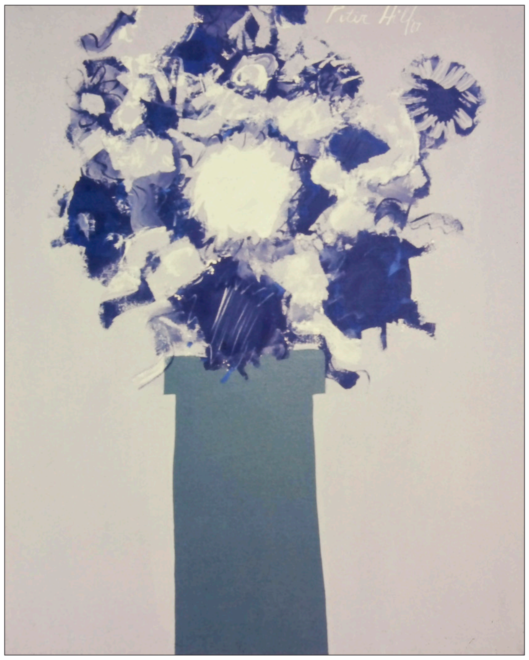
NAME Peter Hill 05
ADDRESS 11734 Shirley
Omaha, Nebraska, 68144

INVENTORY AS OF August 7 1967

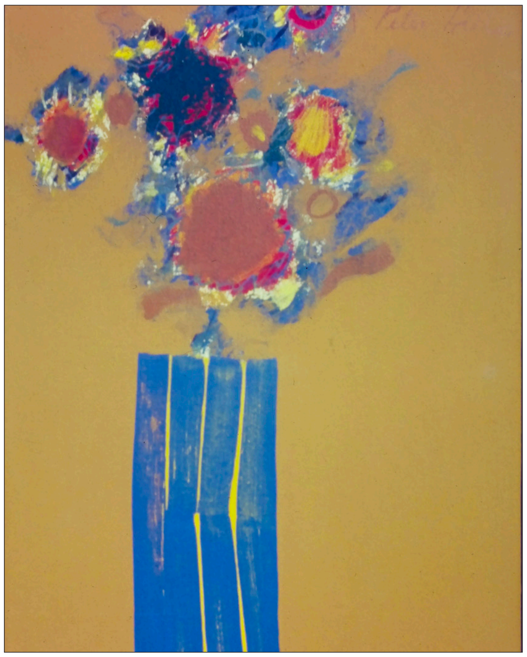
DATE REC'D	OUR NUMBER	NO. PCS.	TITLE	SIZE	MEDIUM	RETAIL PRICE			FRAME COST	TOTAL RETAIL
	001		Flowers I	14X18	Acrylic	175 00				
	003		" III	"	"	200 00				
	004		Harrior II	27¾X27½	"	250 00				
	005		Flowers	11X15	Wtrclr	50 00				
	006		Landscape I	11X15	"	50 00				
	007		" II	10X15	"	50 00				
	008		Small Garden	11X15	"	50 00				
	002		Flowers II			150 00	sold			
				LESS 50%		75 –				
				PAID 8/15/67		75 –				

HAVE ONE OTHER PAINTING ON LAY-AWAY (FLOWERS I) — YOUR WORK HAS BEEN WELL RECEIVED, BUT I DON'T THINK WE HAVE ENOUGH OF THAT TYPE OF YOUR WORK, HOW ABOUT A FEW MORE PIECES?

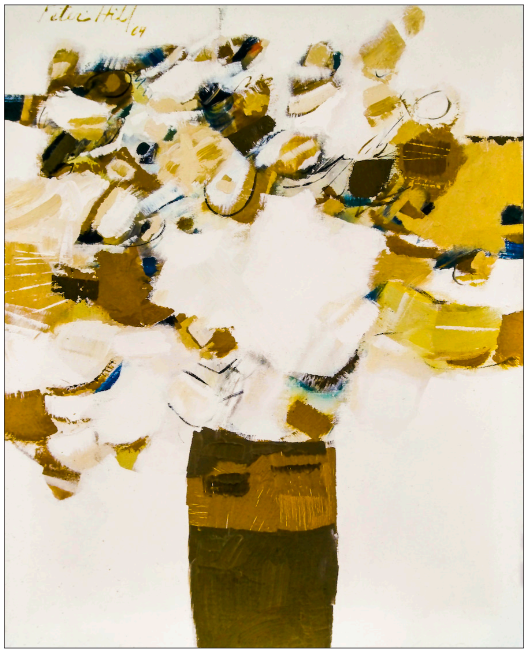
Regards to you and your family.



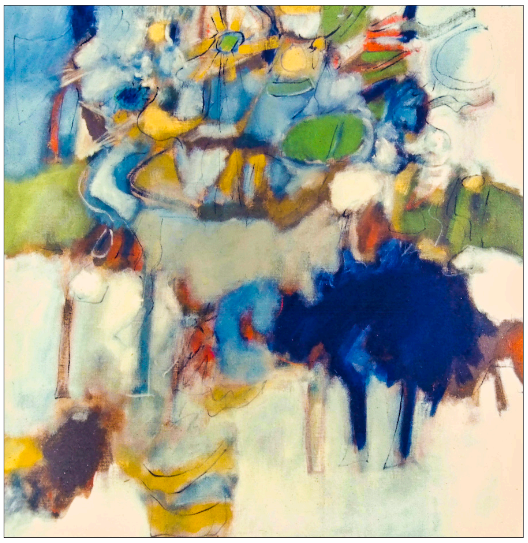
Evil Flowers, 1967. Acrylic on canvas.



Flowers, 1967. Acrylic on canvas.



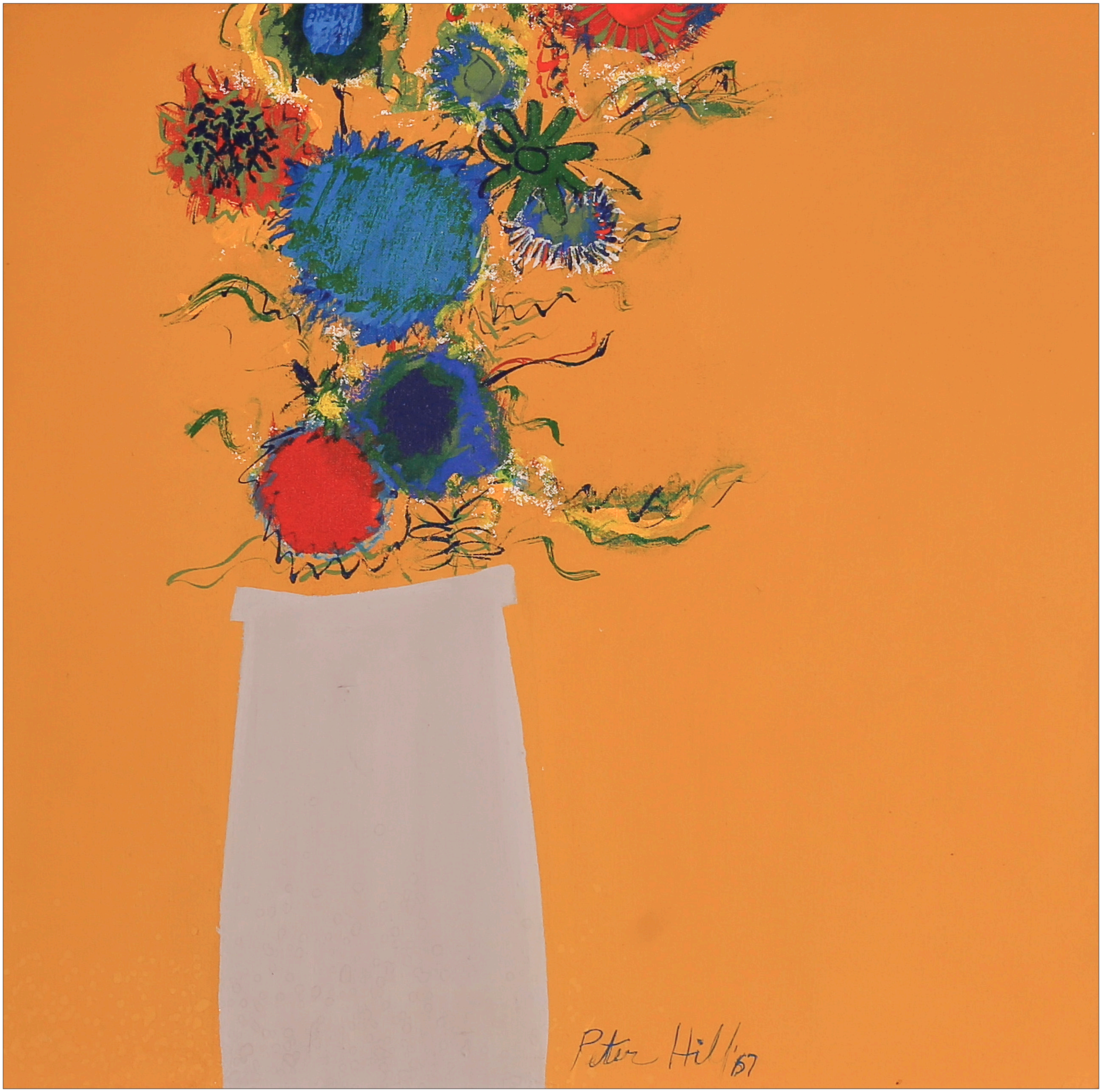
Flowers, 1964. Oil on canvas.



Flower Study, 1965.
Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 36 in.

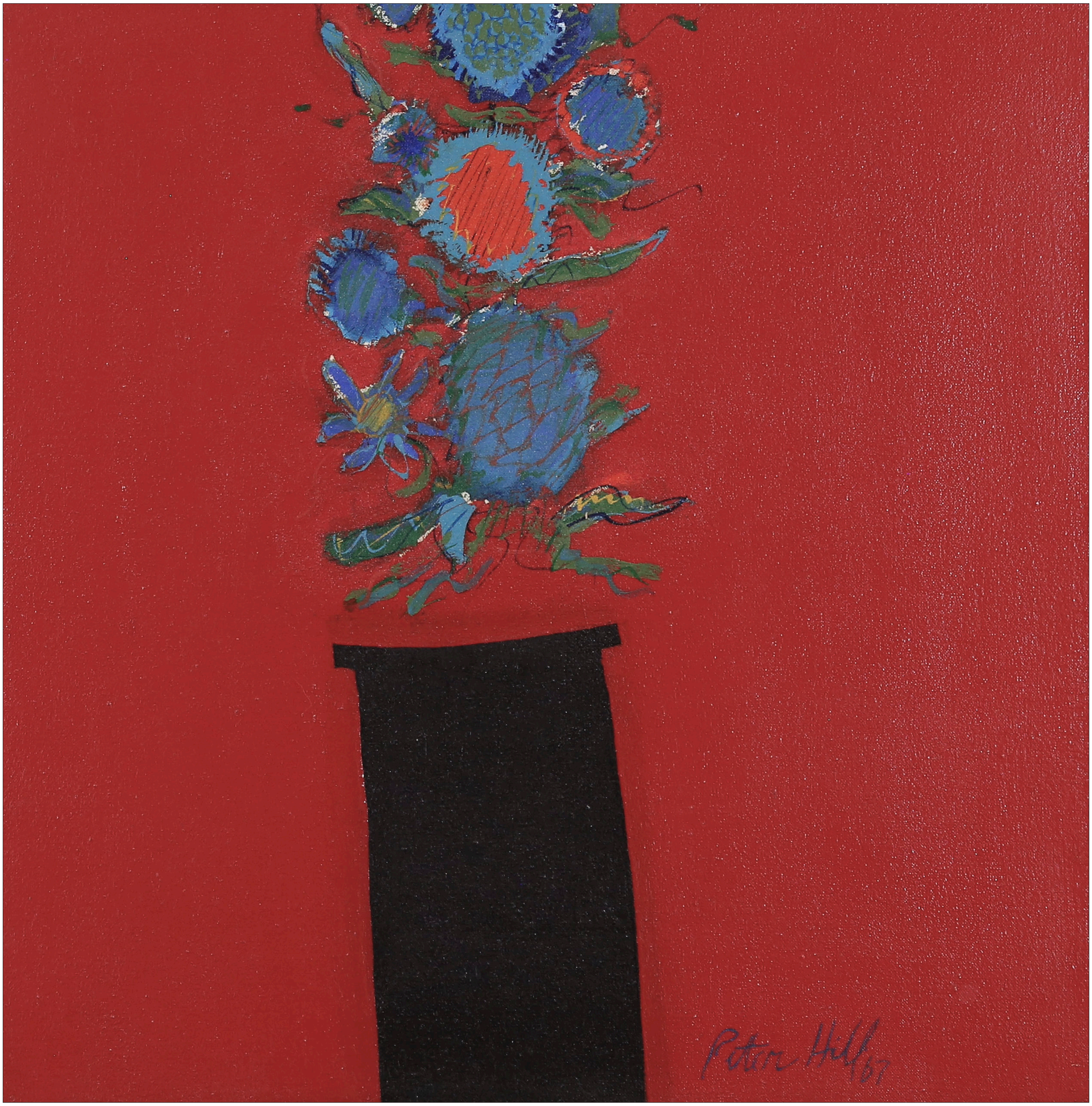
Fort Worth Star-Telegram,
December 11, 1966

Peter Hill, professor of art at the University of Omaha, has three new flower abstractions in the show that are so free as to appear to have been done with light-hearted abandon. Two of the three were in the Junior Council's recent purchase show.


Peter Hill /67

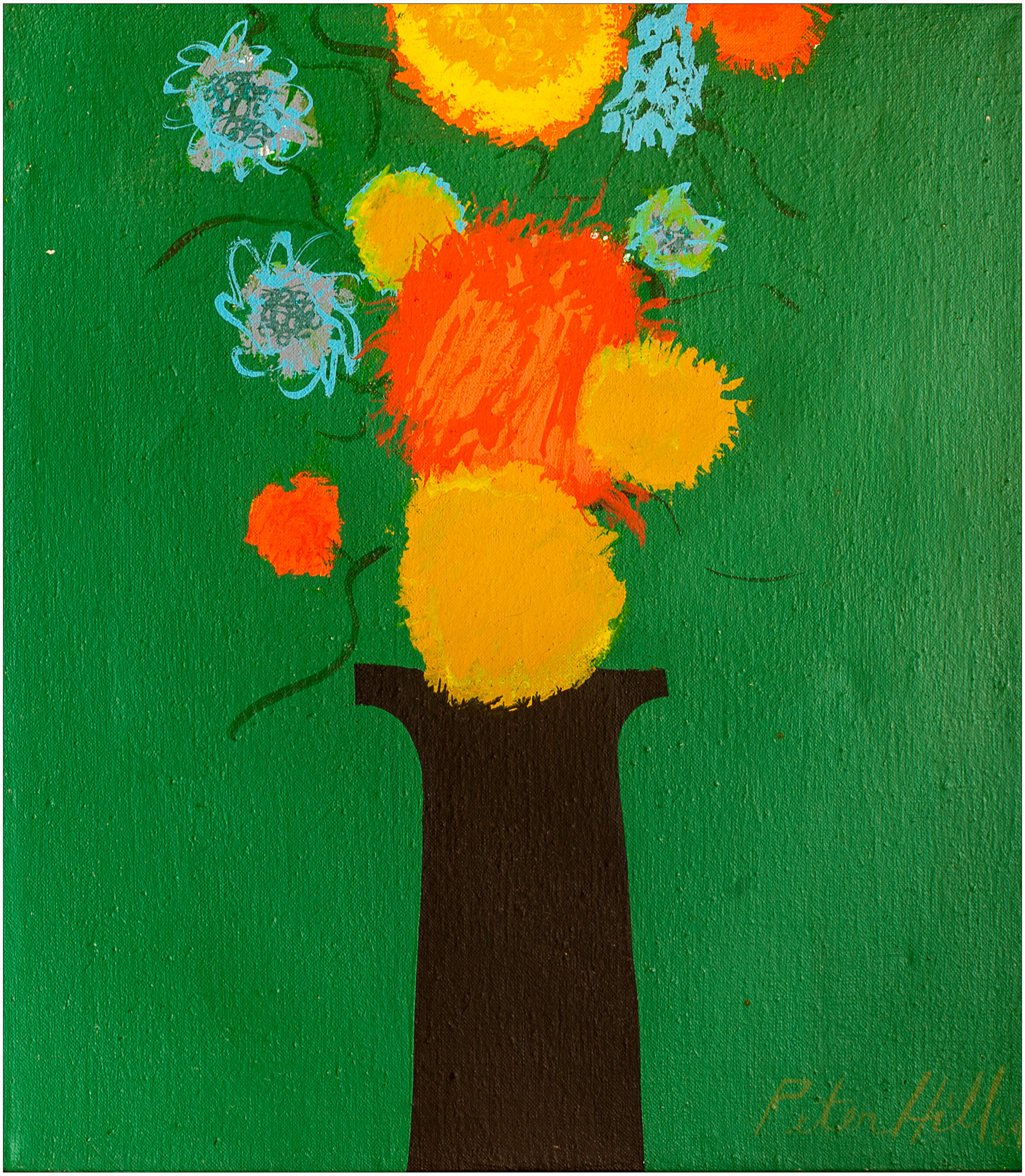
Flowers

1967. Acrylic on canvas, 16 x 16 in.
Collection of Meghan Freeman and Evan Porter.



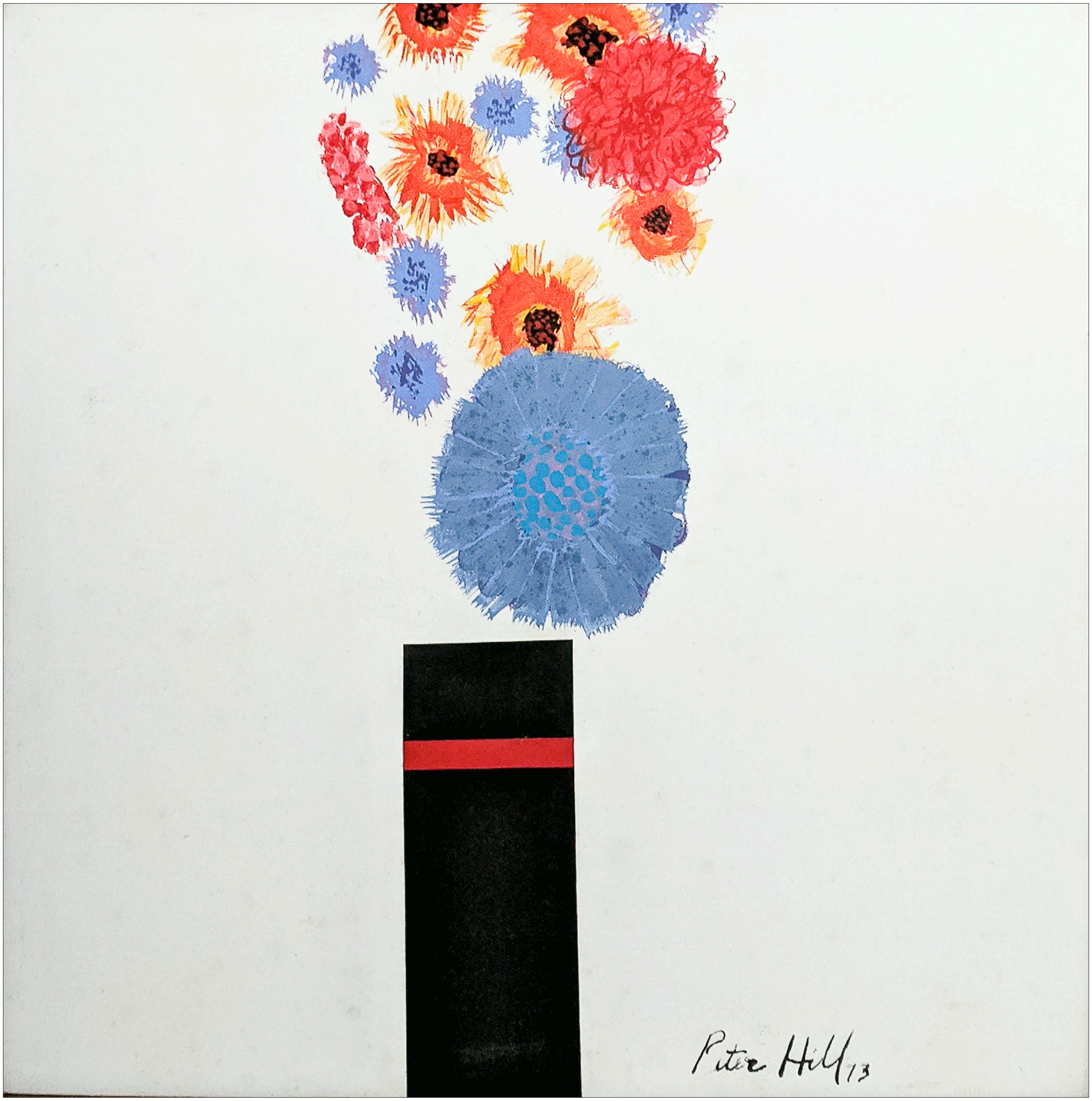
Flowers

1967. Acrylic on canvas, 16.25 x 16 in.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.



Flowers

October 1969. Acrylic on canvas, 16 x 14 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman. Canada.


Peter Hill 73

Flowers

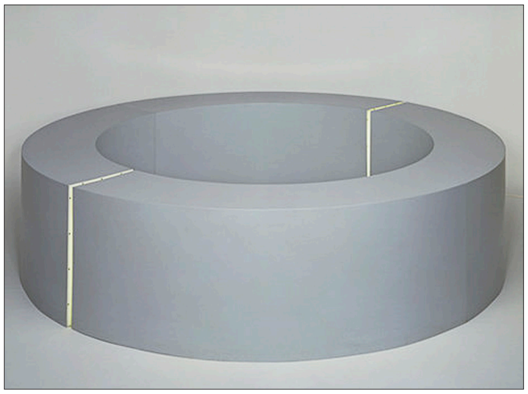
1973. Acrylic on canvas.

Boxes: 1969 to 1972

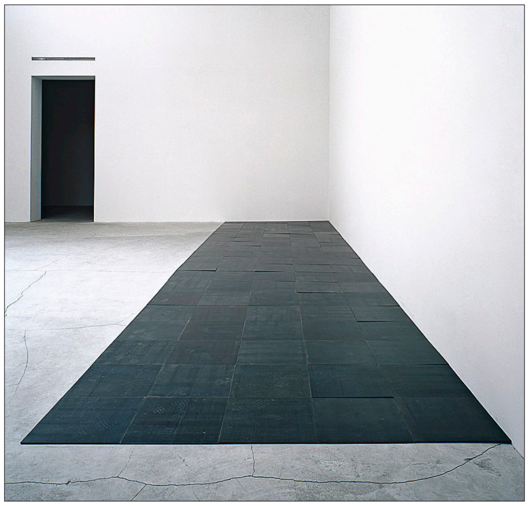
The article on the next page is from November 1967, making it seem out of place here. But read the article and consider the paintings and you'll understand.

I mentioned that in 1969 my Modernist father tackled what books now call Minimalism. I am cringing at covering "Modernism v. Minimalism in 200 words or less," but here goes.

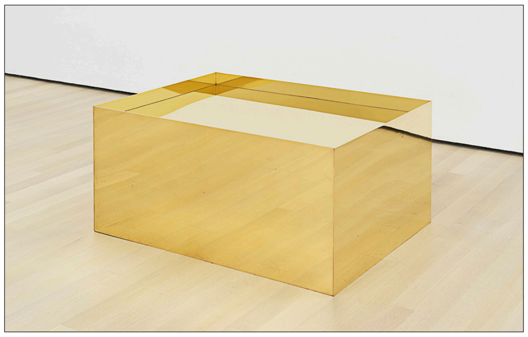
First up, Modernism is best known for paintings, Minimalism for sculptures. Shown are three famed examples my father likely saw in magazines. (Dad particularly liked Judd; I think he appreciated the man's color sense and uncompromising character.)



Robert Morris, 1965–6



Carl Andre, 1967



Donald Judd, 1968

Second, Modernism believed in the personal expression of the artist's self. From Dad's MFA thesis: "The personal creation of a whole new universe that reflects [the artist's] nature and temperament is his occupation." Minimalism downplayed artists creating expressive new universes in favor of building mute objects in our shared one.

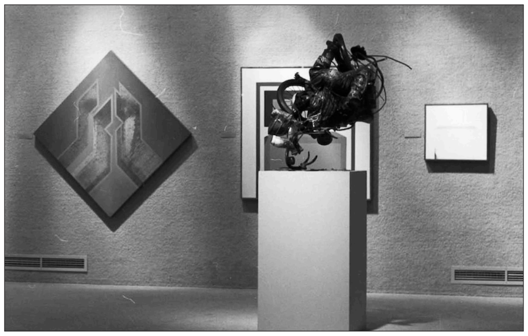
Third, Modernism emphasized the artist's technical skill, i.e., an ability to personally manipulate materials, be they paint, steel, whatnot. The artist's hands were all over their products, and not just metaphorically. Minimalism deployed modern industrial processes that produced art the artist never had to touch. The skill was less personally physical and more impersonally cerebral.

Finally, in Modernism, it's what's inside that counts, i.e., inside the frame, inside the sculpture. One critic suggested that Modernist works led viewers to a state of "absorption" where the outside world dropped away. (Think of art "transporting" a viewer.) Minimalism wants the opposite. Its objects shape spaces and force viewers into awareness of their own bodies and surroundings.

Dad believed in personal expression and technical skill to create a world in a frame. Minimalism rejected that. There are good-faith arguments about how Minimalism protests too much, particularly when it comes to erasing the artist's personal vision. Shaping space is making a universe. But spend some time with Minimalist objects and you'll agree there's a different intent and result than my father's paintings.

It's hard to introduce Minimalism to a broad audience (most of you) without it coming off like a scam. For example, Minimalist artists often hired people to make the building blocks of their works and then hired other people to assemble those works. (That picture on the opposite page? Dad is reading instructions for assembling bricks into a sculpture, which he and students did.) How lazy is that? Where's the artist's skill? Where's the visual pleasure of Matisse's "good armchair"?

I'm not here to argue that; I'm here to answer the question: How did Dad tackle Minimalism? With the *Box* pictures, which occupied him from 1969 to 1972. I'm out of room here, so I'll say more on page 214.



1972, South Dakota State University exhibition; two *Box* paintings visible.

Omaha World-Herald, November 8, 1967

O.U. ‘Rejective Art’ Show: How Little Can Be Created?

What is the least amount of work an artist can do and still create what he calls a piece of art?

Visitors to the “rejective art” exhibit at the University of Omaha may be able to provide some kind of answer to that question. The exhibit will run Thursday through November 30 in Rooms 312 and 313 of the Student Center.

“The art in this exhibition has been called passive and aggressive, impersonal and egotistical, dispassionate and compelling, imaginative and boring, overwhelming and minimal,” said Lucy Lippard, New York editor of *Art International* magazine, who prepared it.

No ‘Nebraska’

Encompassing as her statement is, it does not sum up the works. They appear, to the untrained eye, to range from recollections of a junior high mechanical drawing class to whitewashing a brick house during a dust storm.

Missing, said O.U. Assistant Art Professor Peter Hill, is an all-gray effort titled “Nebraska.” But a similar, all-gray work, “To Carl Andre,” will be displayed.

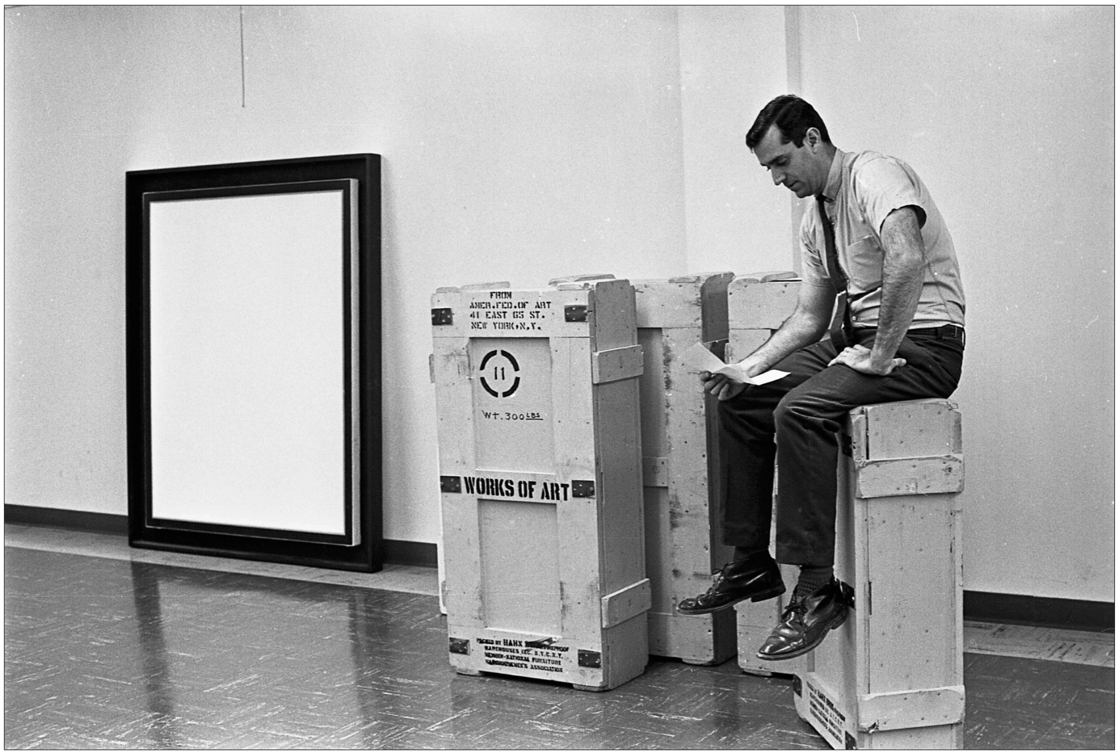
For “scrabble” players, newspaper men, and spelling bee contestants, there is a huge, intriguing creation which consists only of the word “word” on a white background.

Mr. Hill said he is elated that the exhibition is coming here direct from New York as the first stop on a tour. The sponsor is the American Federation of Arts.

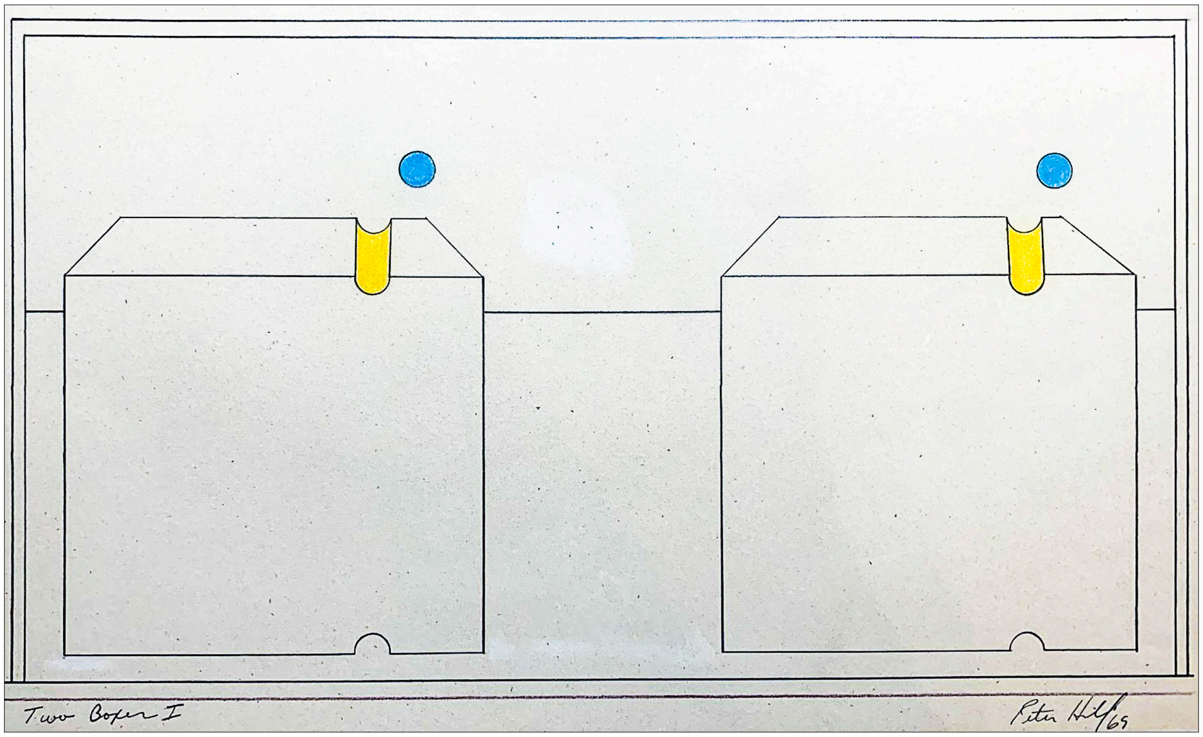
Lots of Bricks

Mr. Hill is not so elated, however, over the prospect of assembling some 1,130 pounds of bricks for one display. The bricks came in boxes weighing as much as three hundred pounds and can be placed in any of six patterns, according to the artist, who sent instructions.

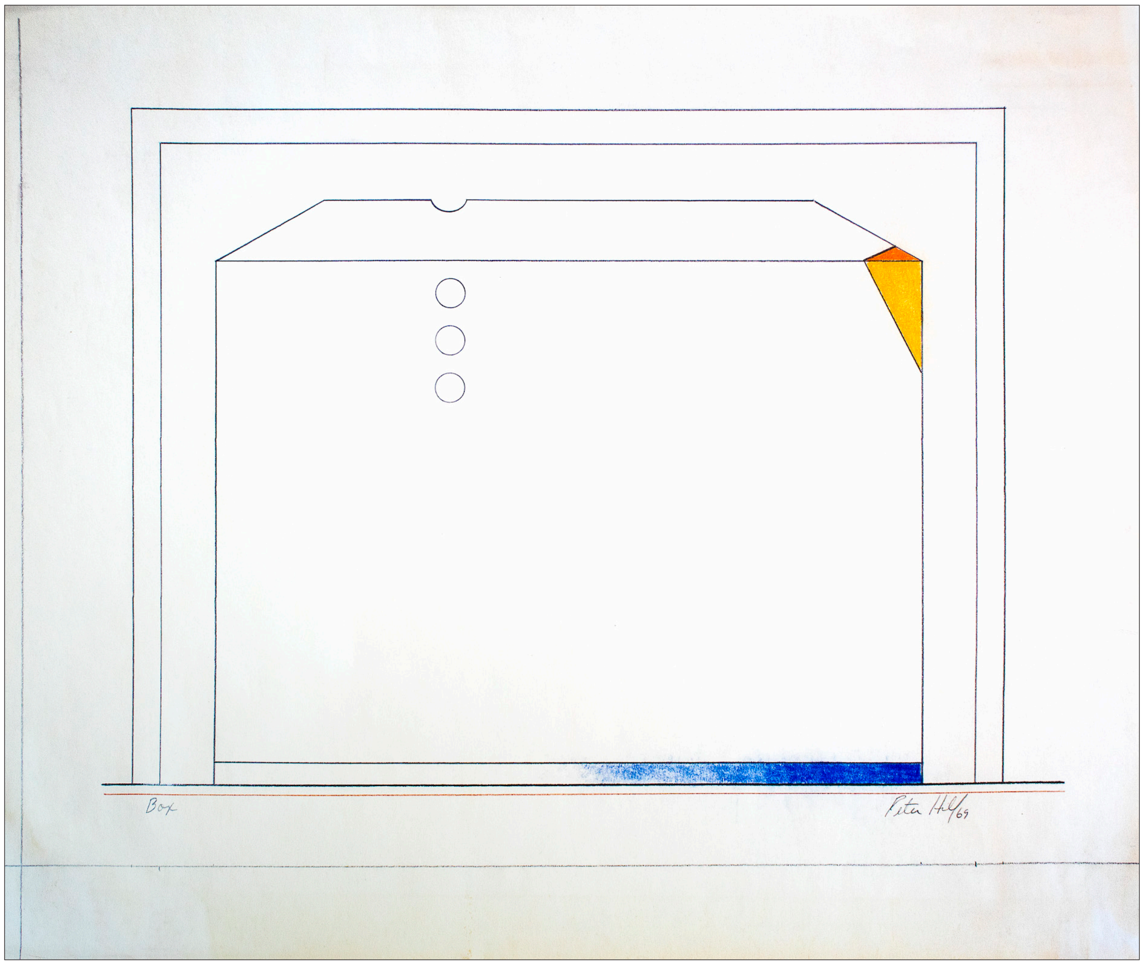
Mrs. Lippard will describe the art on Friday at 8:30 p.m. in a talk at the center. It also goes under the names “primary structures,” “minimal,” “systematic painting,” “ABC art,” and “reductive art.”



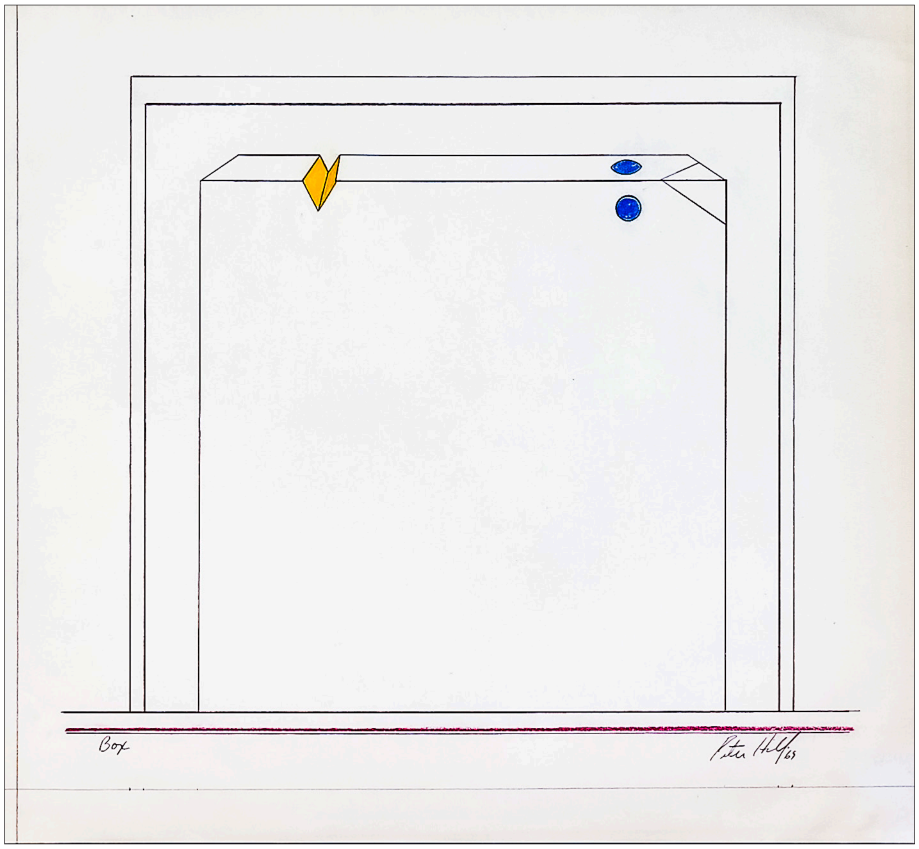
Hill atop “artistic” bricks . . . “Gray/Blue No. 4” in background.


Two Boxes I
Peter Hill/69

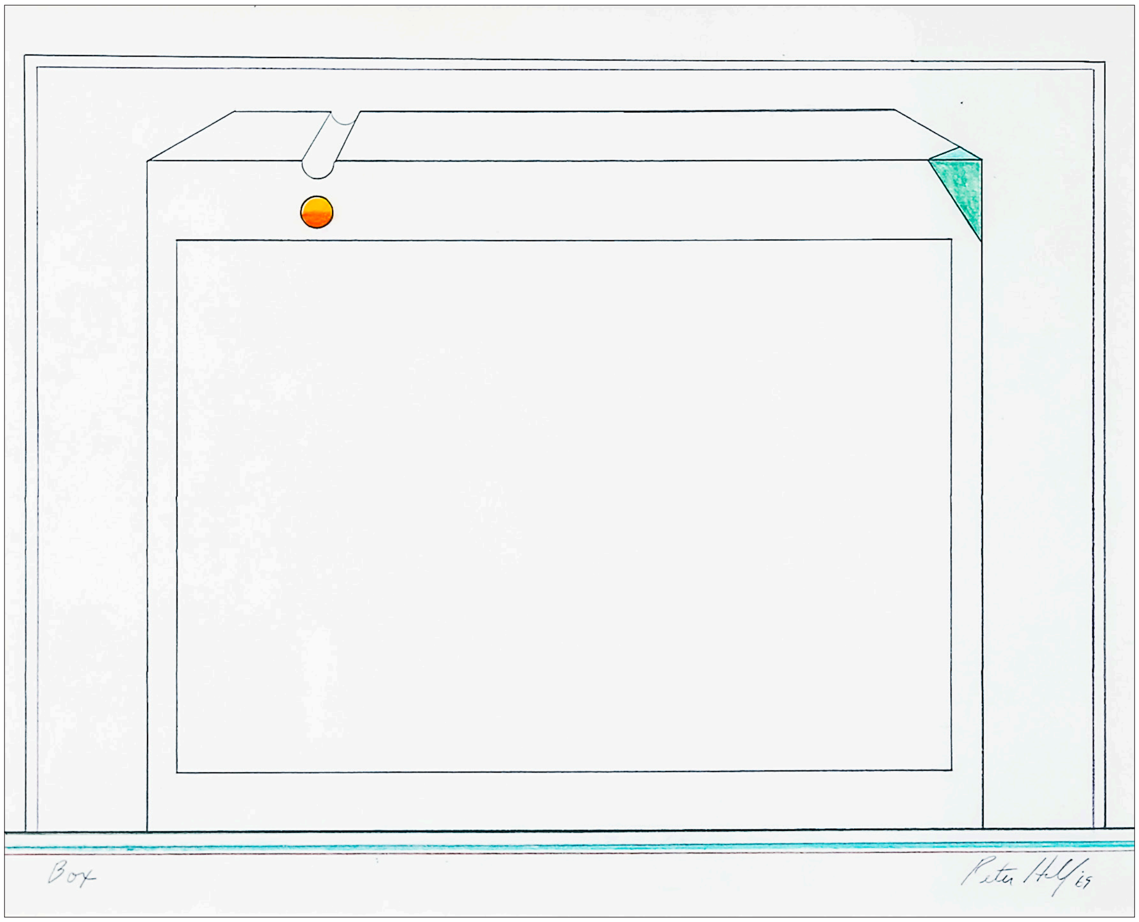
Two Boxes I, 1969. Graphite and colored pencil on paper, 9.5 x 16 in.
Collection of Todd ("T. J.") and Shanna Freeman.


Box
Peter Hill/69

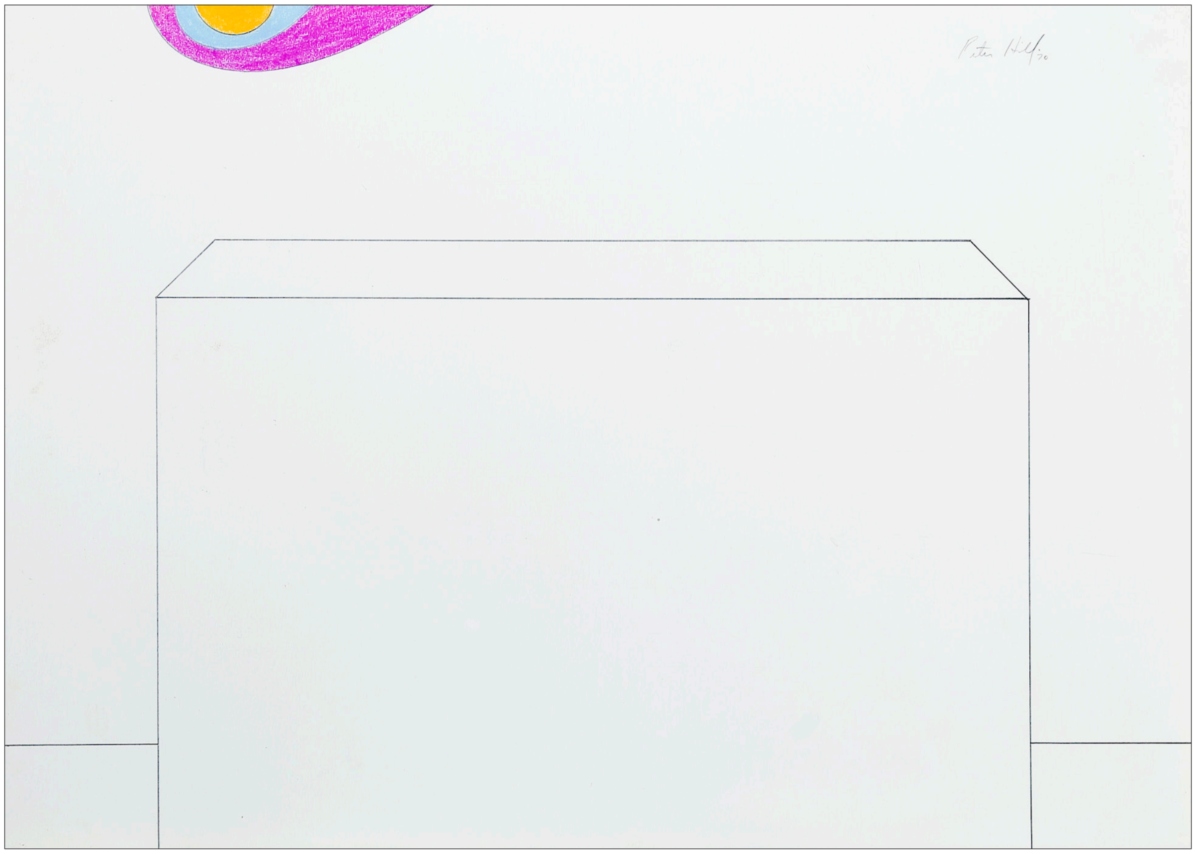
Box, 1969.
Graphite and colored
pencil on paper, 17.5 x 20.75 in.


Box
Peter Hill 69

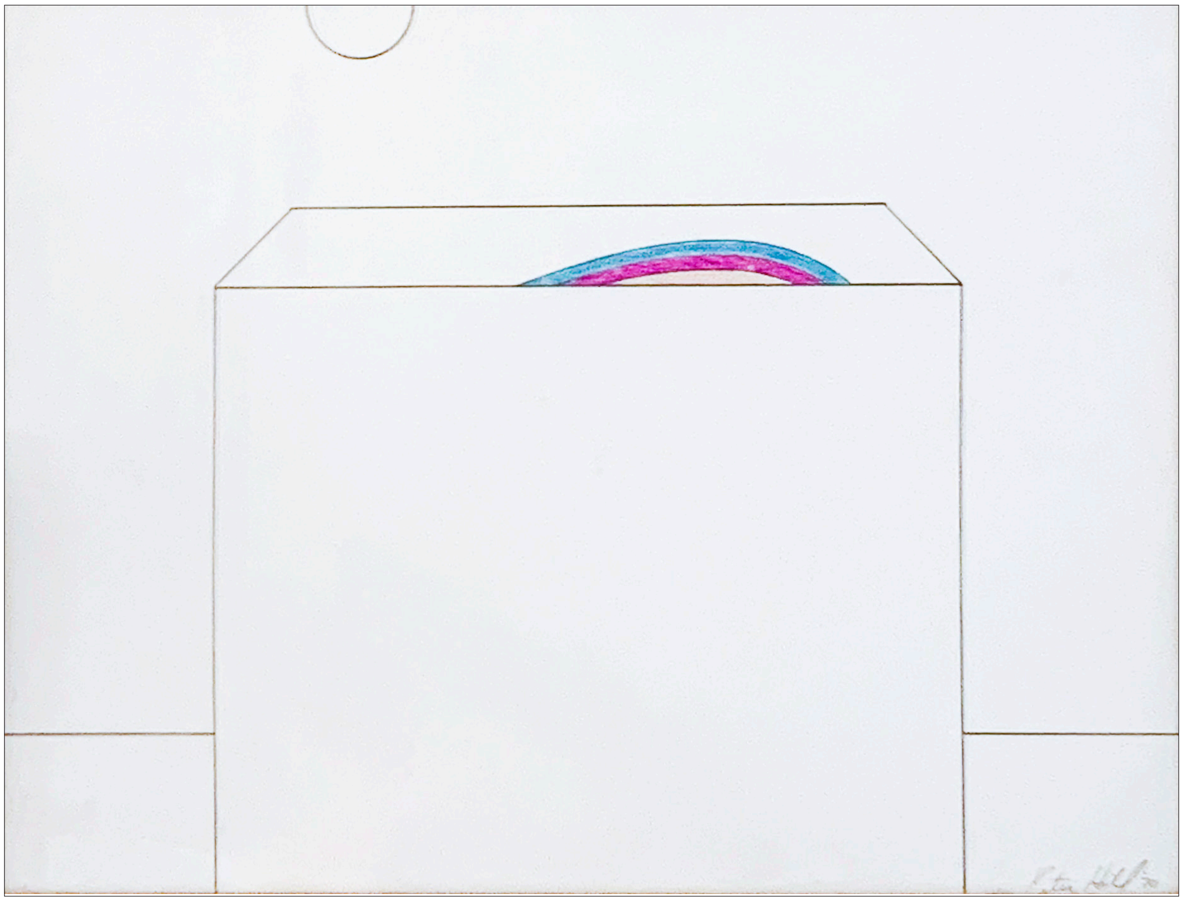
Box, 1969.
Graphite and colored pencil on paper, 14 x 16 in.
Collection of Jonathan and Maureen Hill.


Box
Peter Hill 69

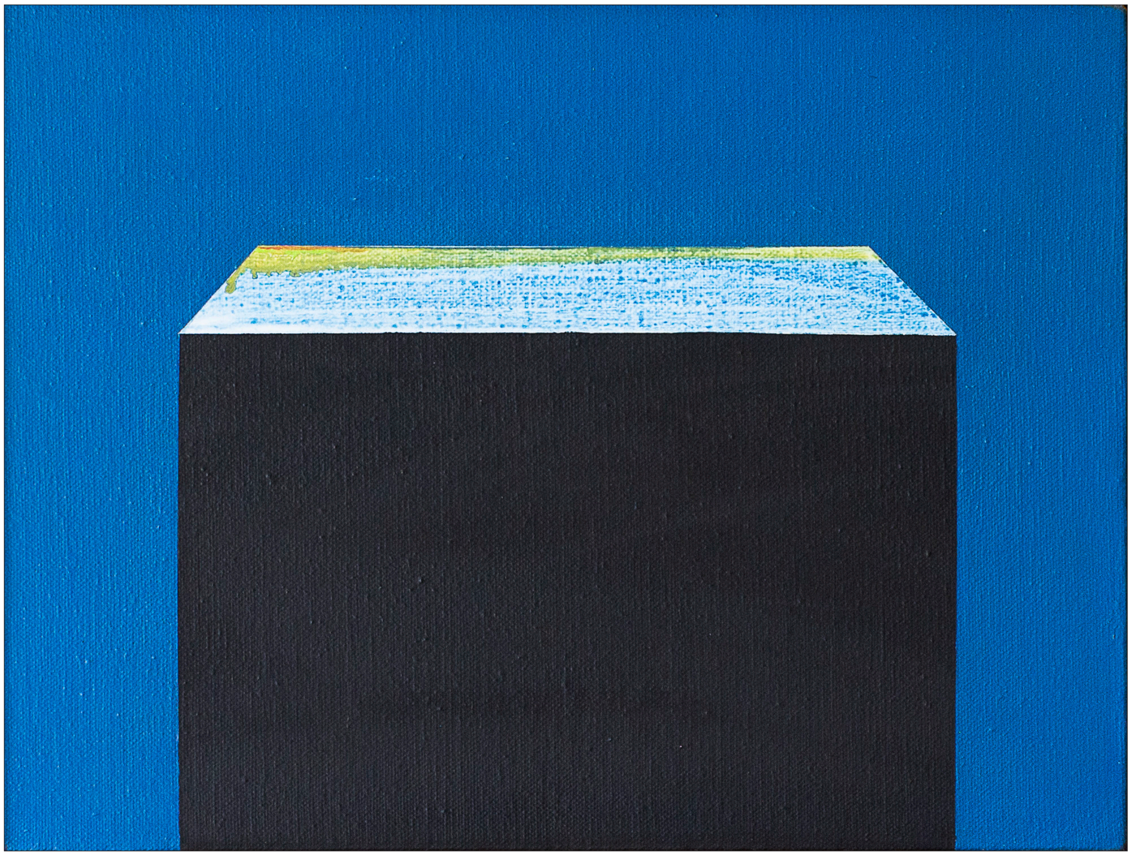
Box, 1969. Graphite and
colored pencil on paper, 17 x 21 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



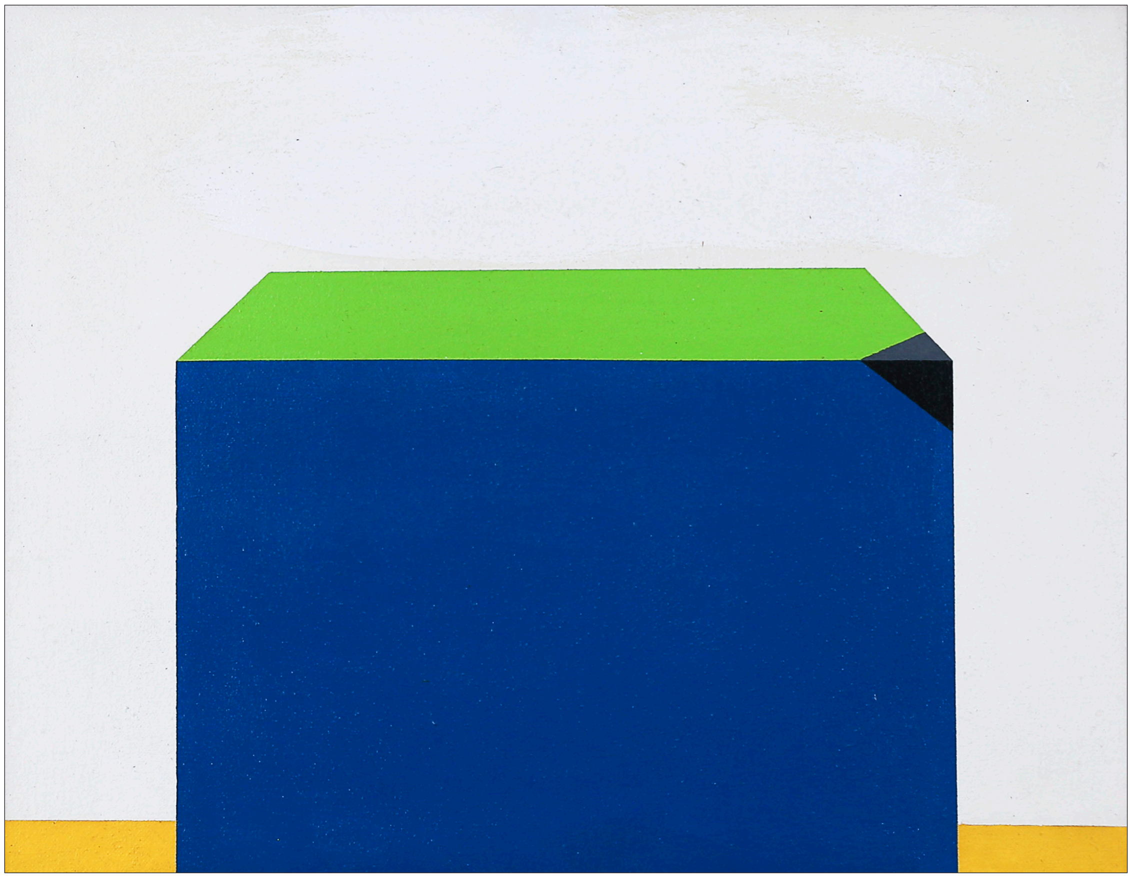
Box, 1970.
Graphite and colored pencil on paper.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.



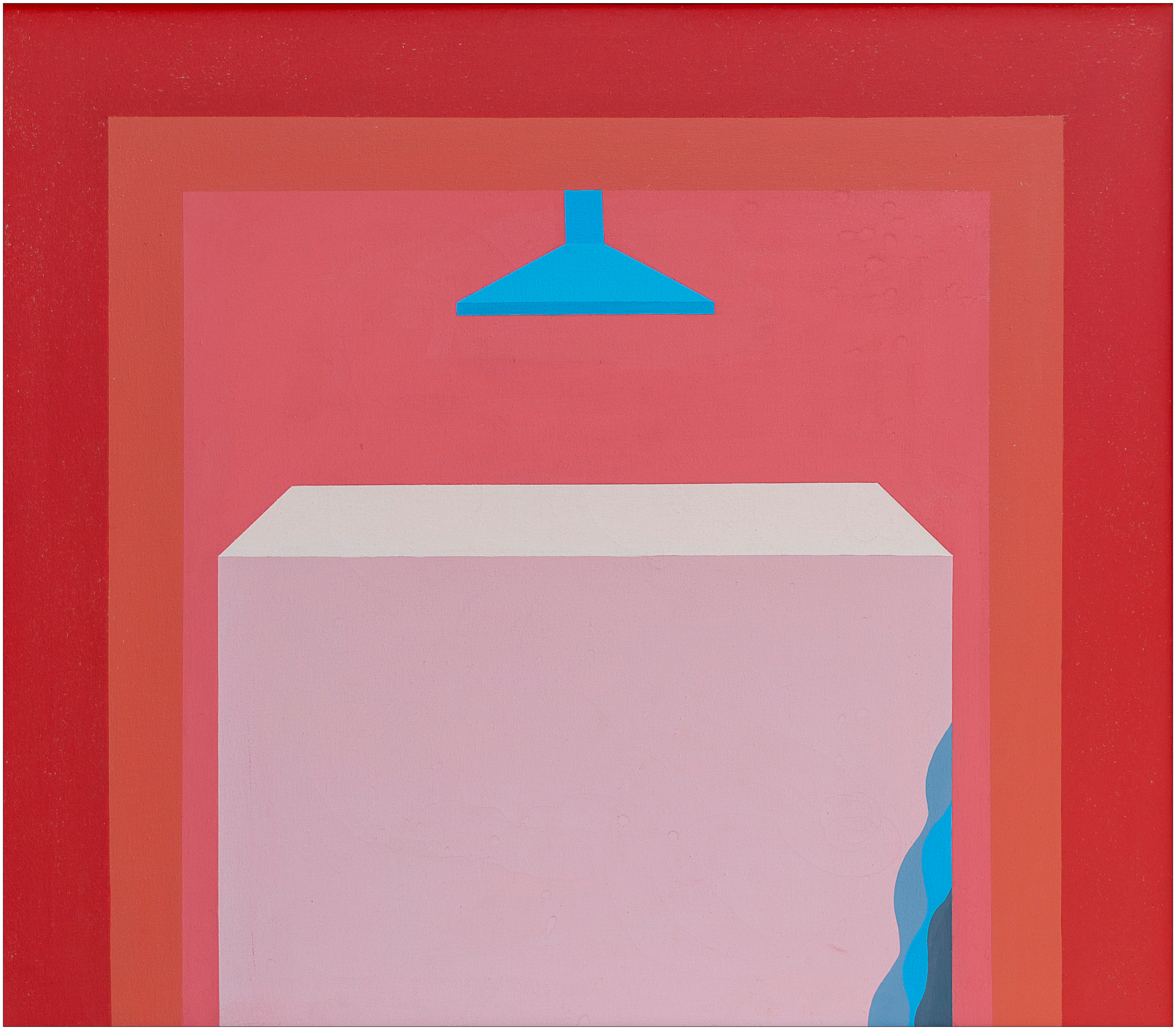
Box II, 1970.
Graphite and colored pencil, 12 x 16 in.
Collection of Katy and Jon Welles.



Box 3, 1970.
Acrylic on canvas on wood, 10.5 x 14 in.
Collection of Kristin and Greg Janisch.

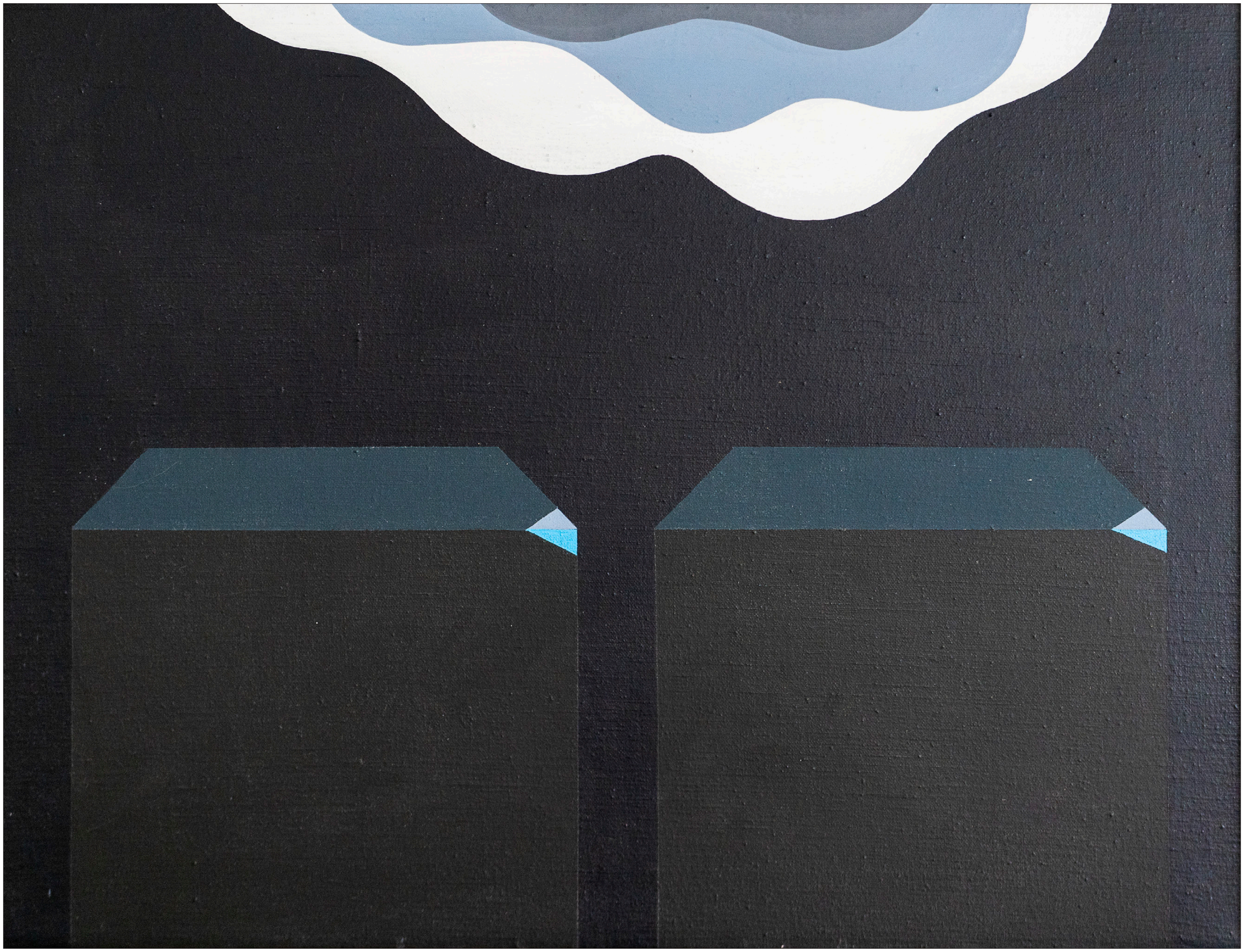


Gray Corner, 1970.
Acrylic on canvas, 10.5 x 13.25 in.
Collection of Mary and
Samuel Achelpohl.



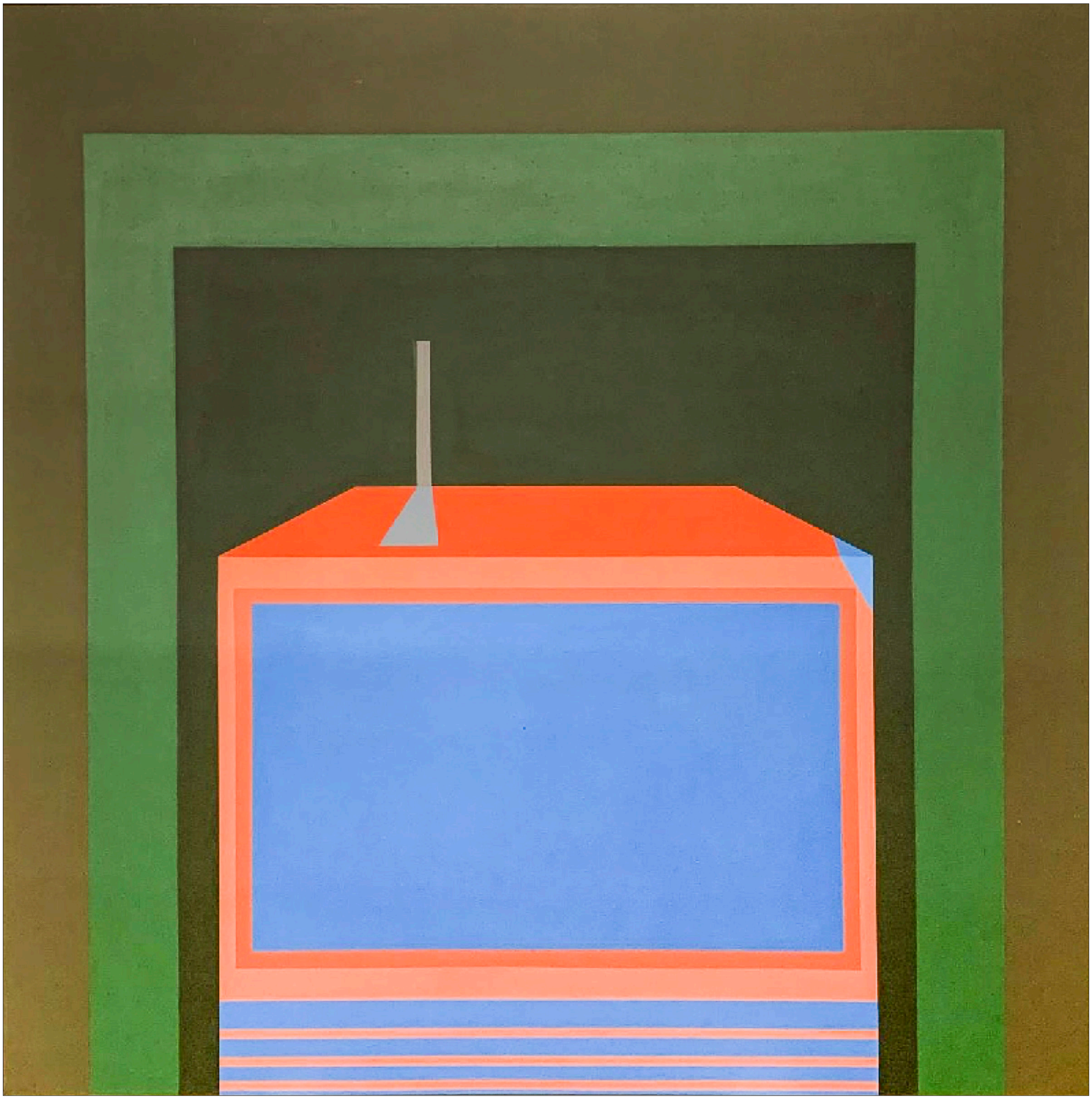
Pink Box

1969. Acrylic on canvas, 27.75 x 32 in.
Collection of Alex Freeman.



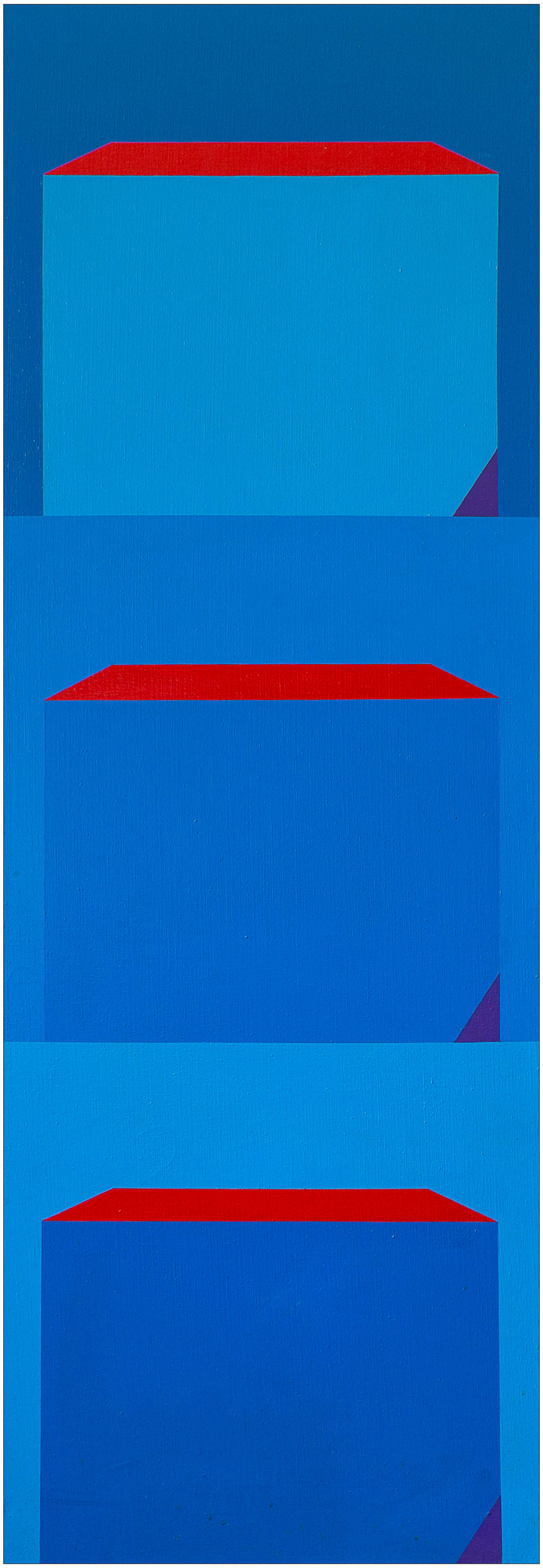
Black Boxes

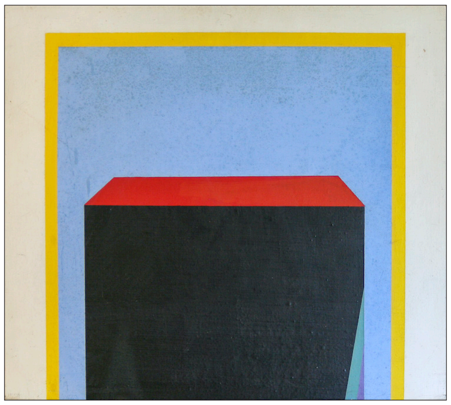
1969. Acrylic on canvas, 19 x 24.5 in.
Collection of Katy and Jon Welles.



Box

1969. Acrylic and tempera on canvas, 68.375 x 68.375 in.
Collection of the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, Lincoln, Nebraska.





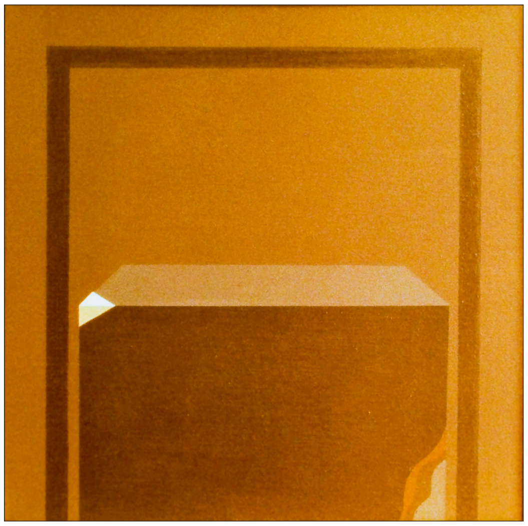
Number 26, 1970.
Acrylic on canvas, 14.5 x 16 in.
Collection of Rick and Connie Spellman.
Photograph by Alec Paul.

Untitled

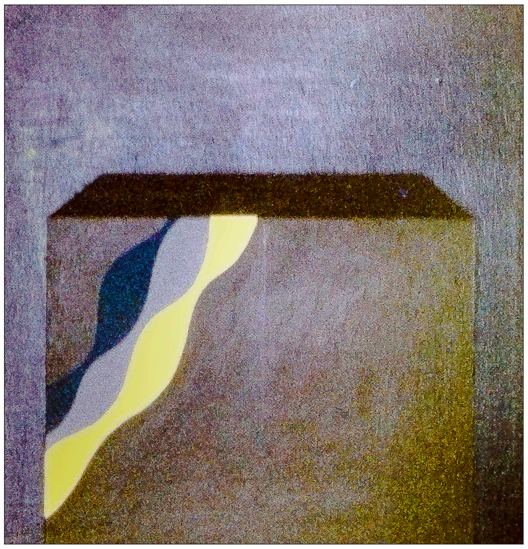
1970. Acrylic on canvas, 70 x 25 in.
Collection of Kristin and Greg Janisch.

"In painting I find myself developing concepts to get them out of my system. I feel that by thoroughly exploiting an idea I will gain far more than if pick at it intermittently. I feel that through forcing concept after concept, an ultimate statement will come as a natural outgrowth of labor."

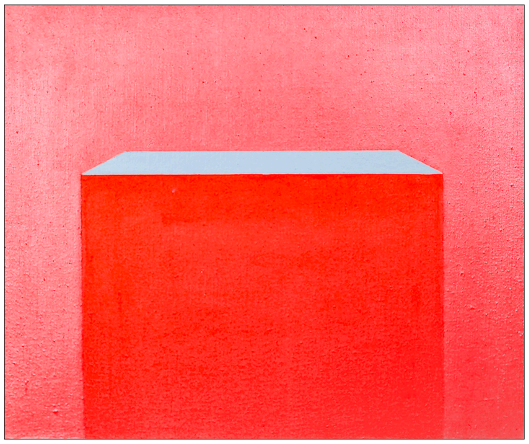
—from Peter Hill's
Master of Fine Arts thesis, 1958



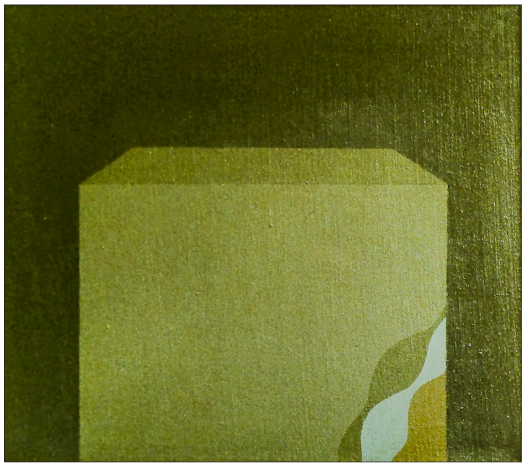
Box, 1969. Acrylic on canvas.



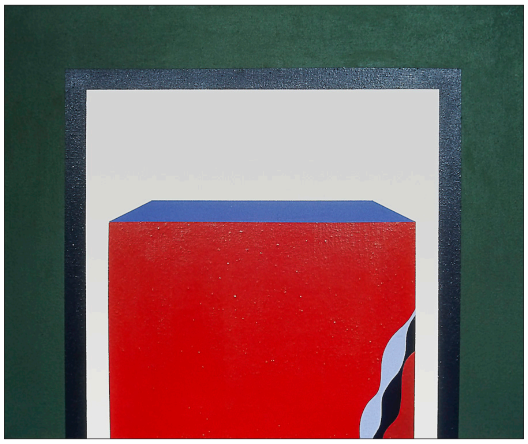
Black Box, 1970–2. Acrylic on canvas.



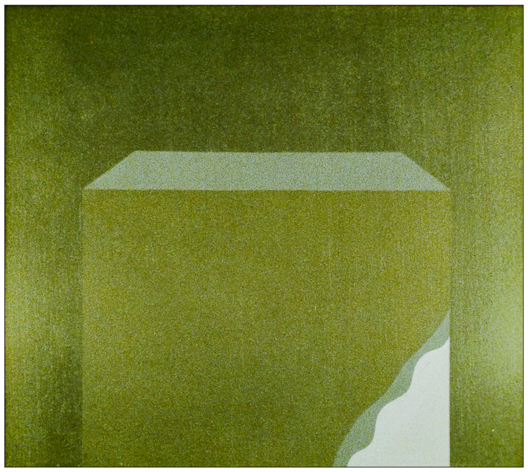
Untitled, 1970–2. Acrylic on canvas.



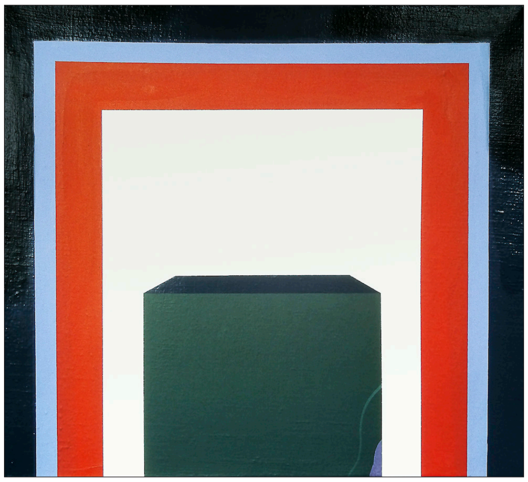
Box, 1970–2. Acrylic on canvas, 19 x 21 in.



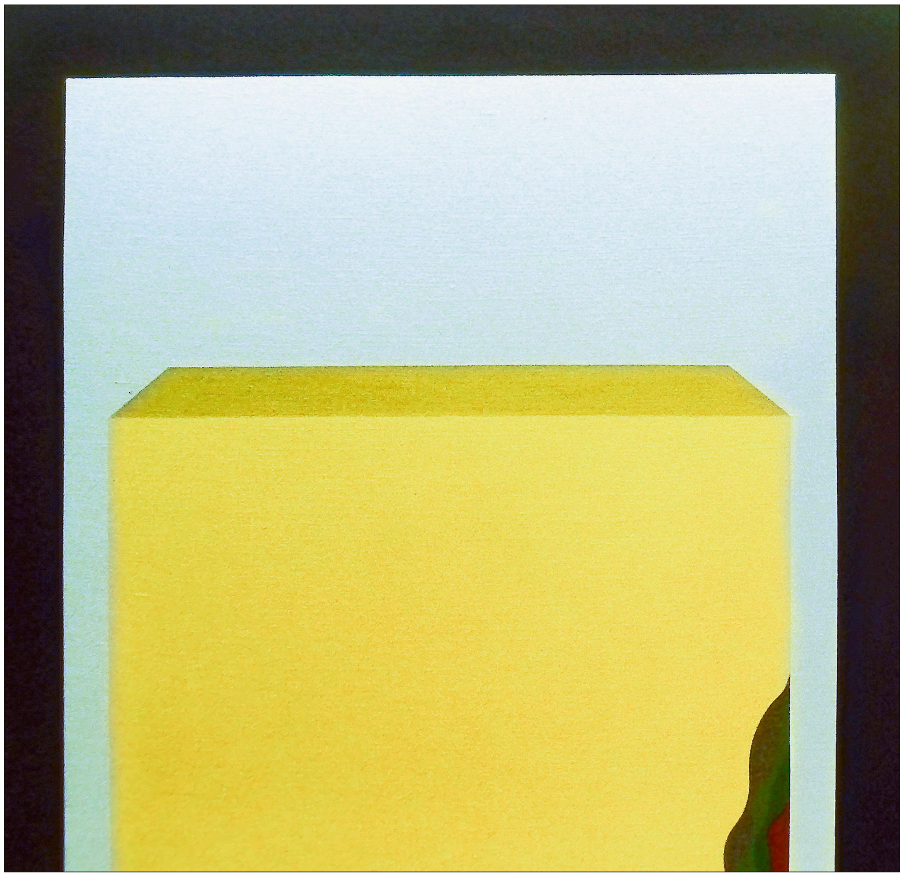
Untitled, 1970–2. Acrylic on canvas.



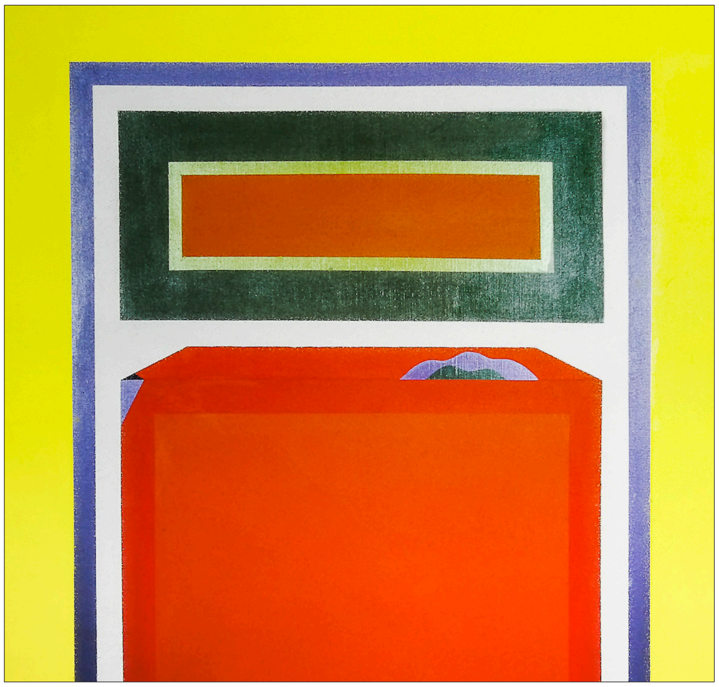
Box, 1970–2. Acrylic on canvas, 21 x 19 in.



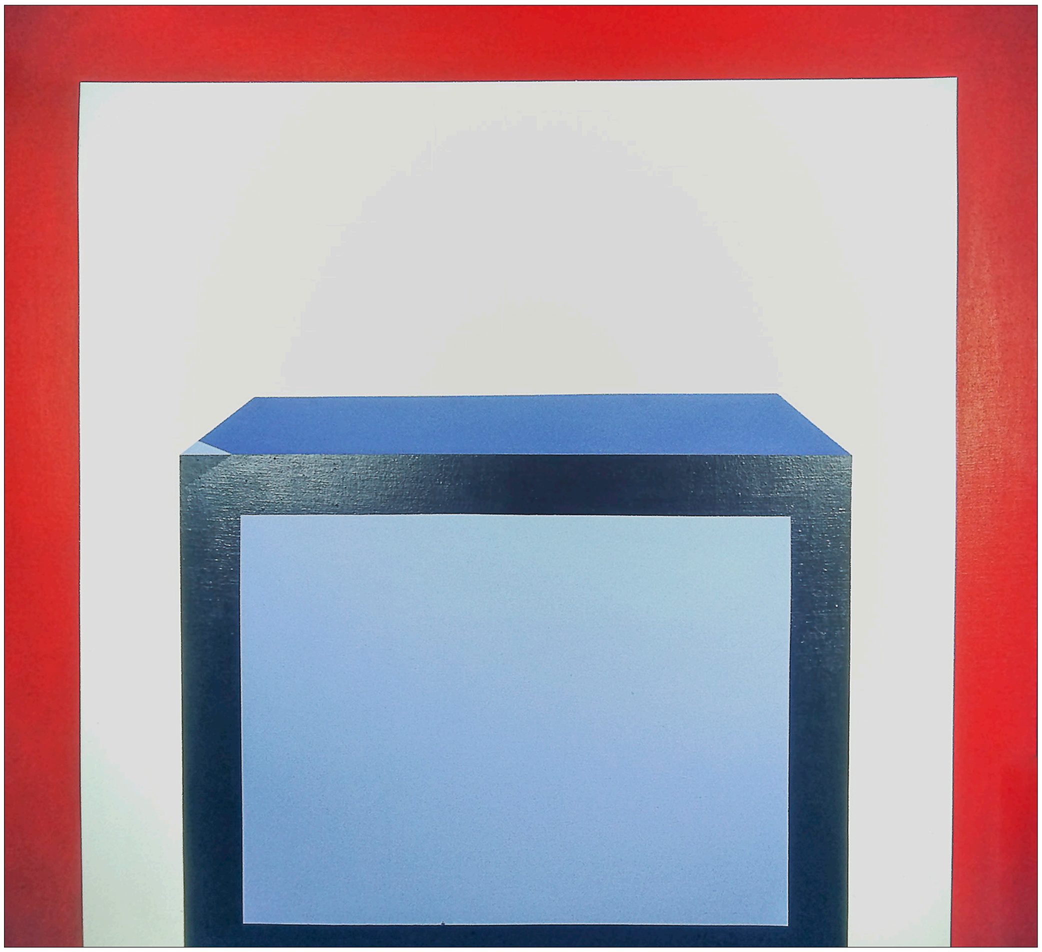
Untitled, 1970–2. Acrylic on canvas.

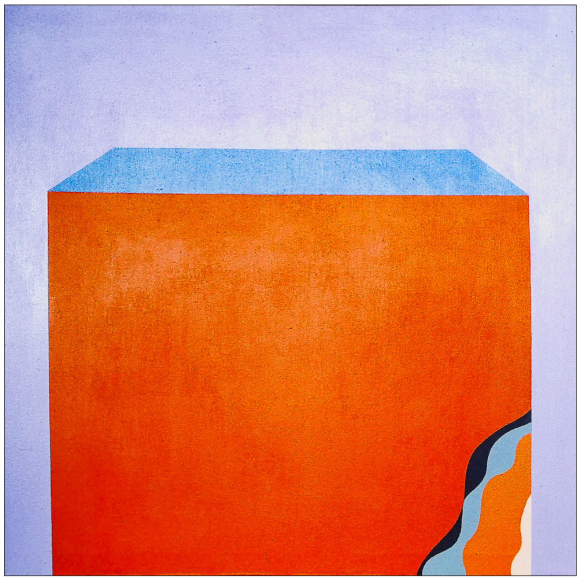


Untitled, 1970–2. Acrylic on canvas, 62 x 53 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



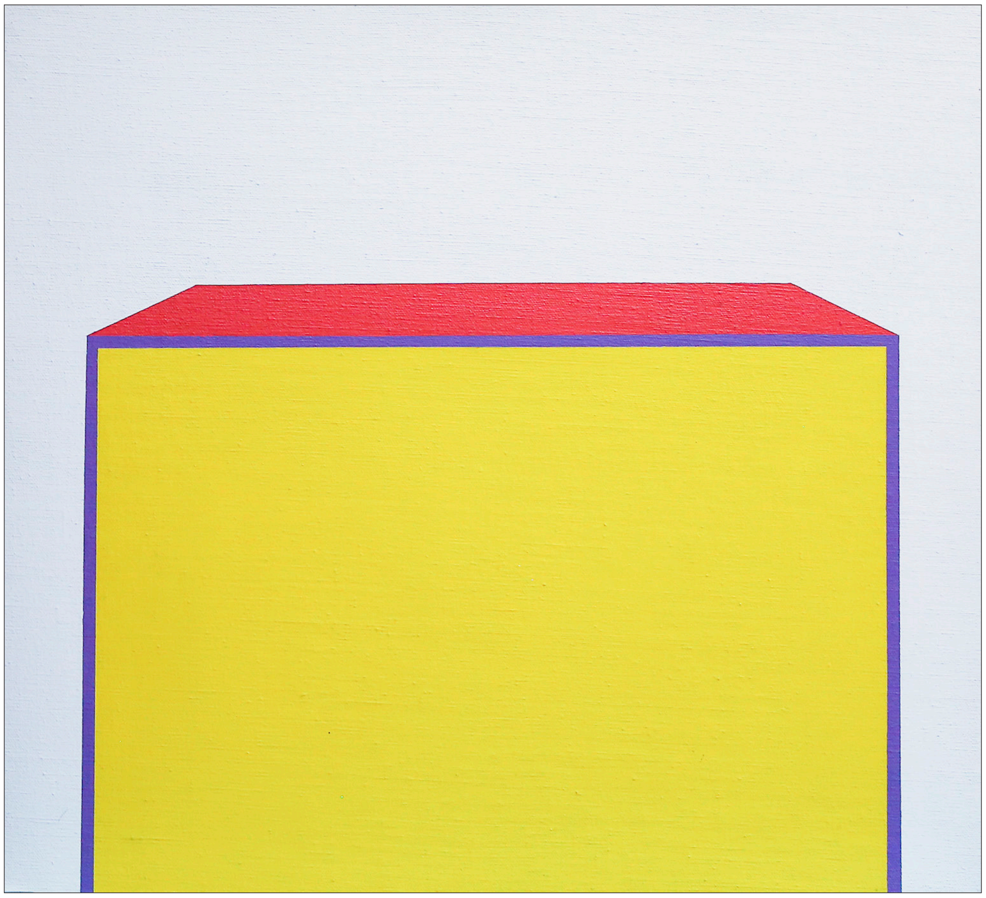
Red Box, 1970. Acrylic on canvas, 46 x 45 in.



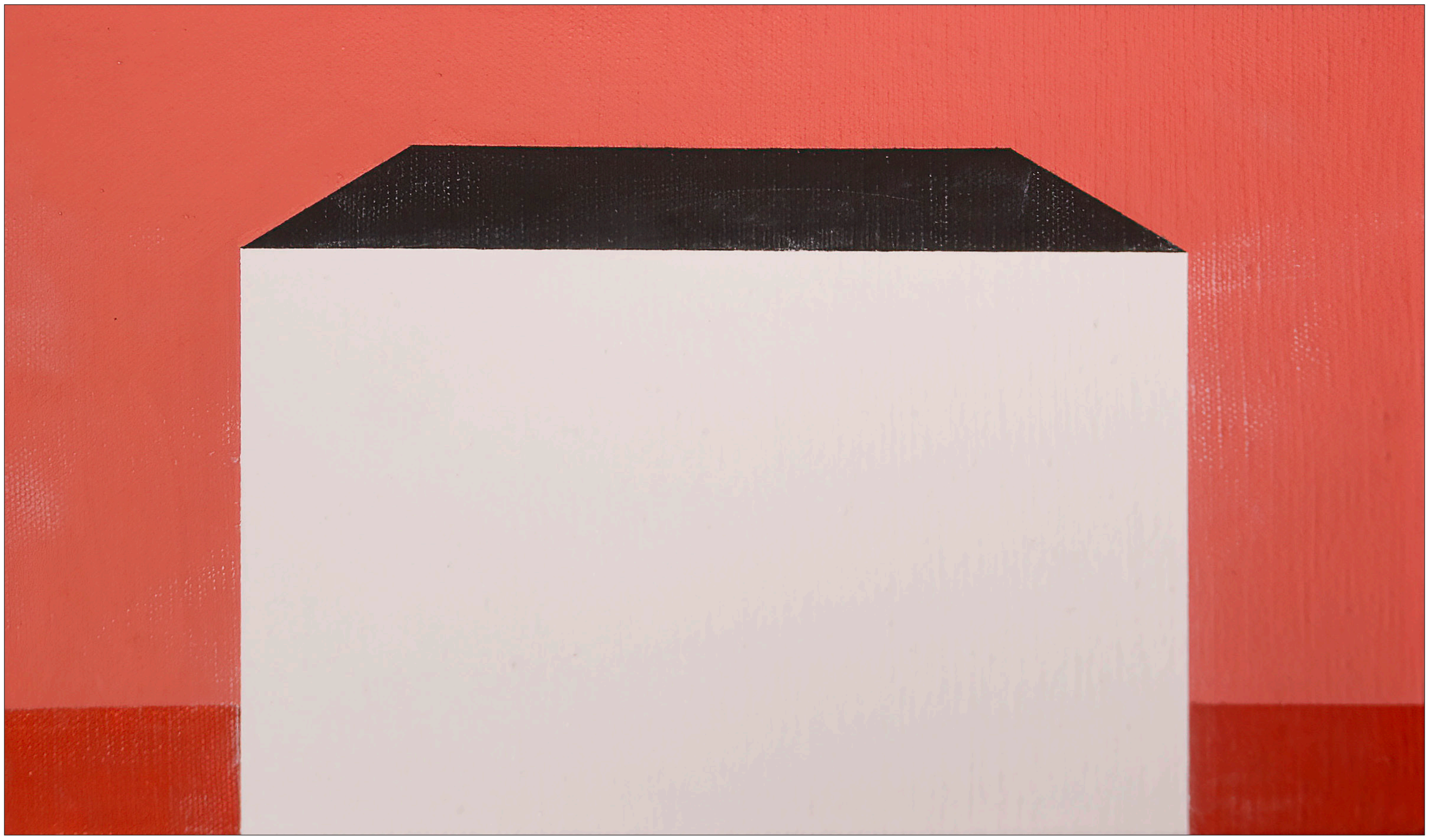


Red Box, 1972. Acrylic on canvas, 37 x 37 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

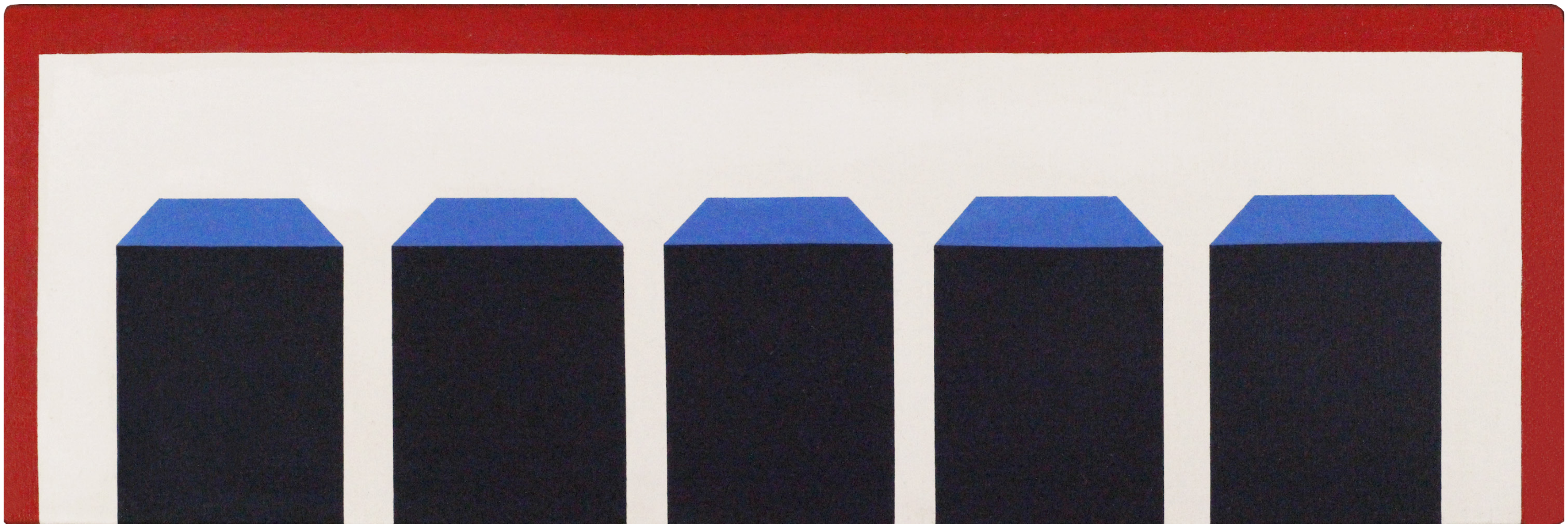
Black and Blue Box, 1971.
Acrylic on canvas, 69 x 69 in.



Yellow Box, 1970.
Acrylic on canvas, 17.5 x 20 in.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.

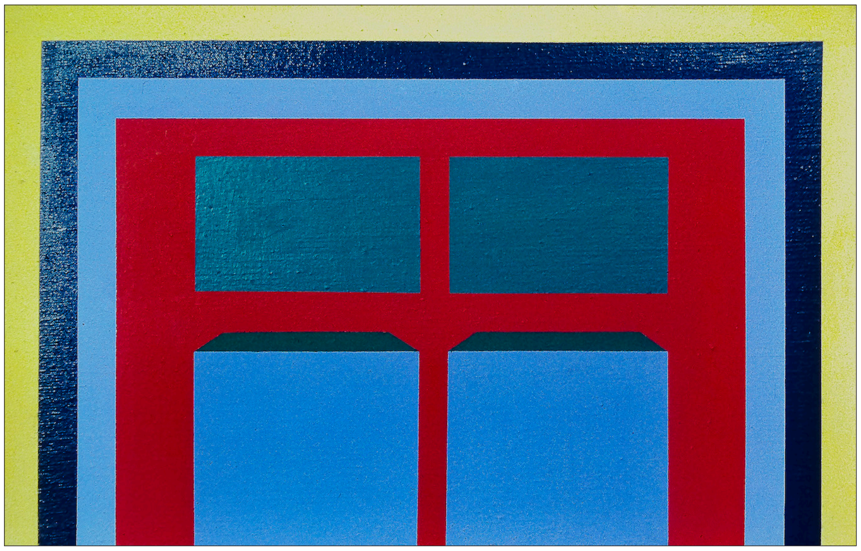


White Box, 1970–2. Acrylic on canvas. Collection of Charles and Kathy Campbell.

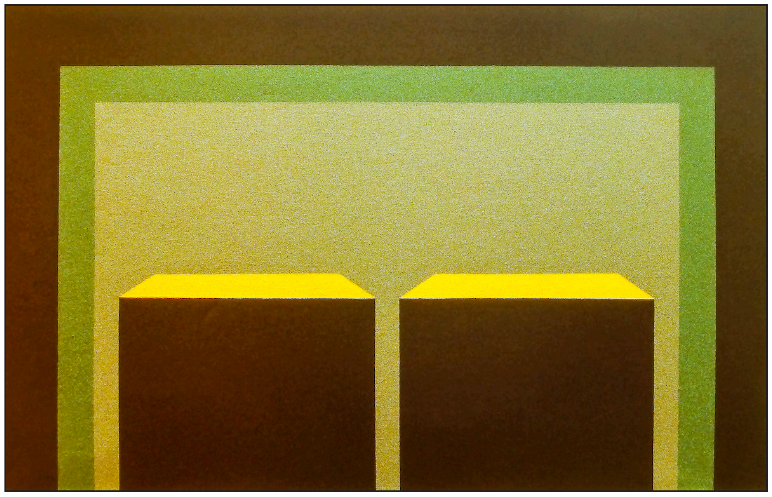


Five Boxes

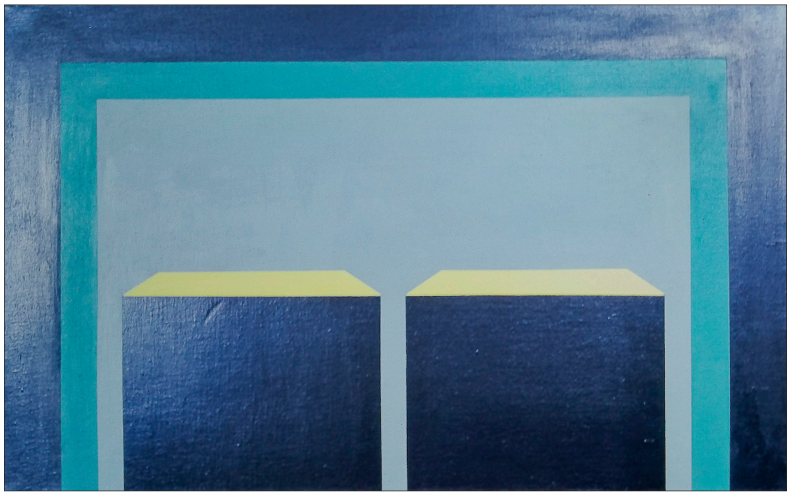
1970. Acrylic on canvas mounted on wood, 11 x 34.25 in.
Collection of the Sousley family.



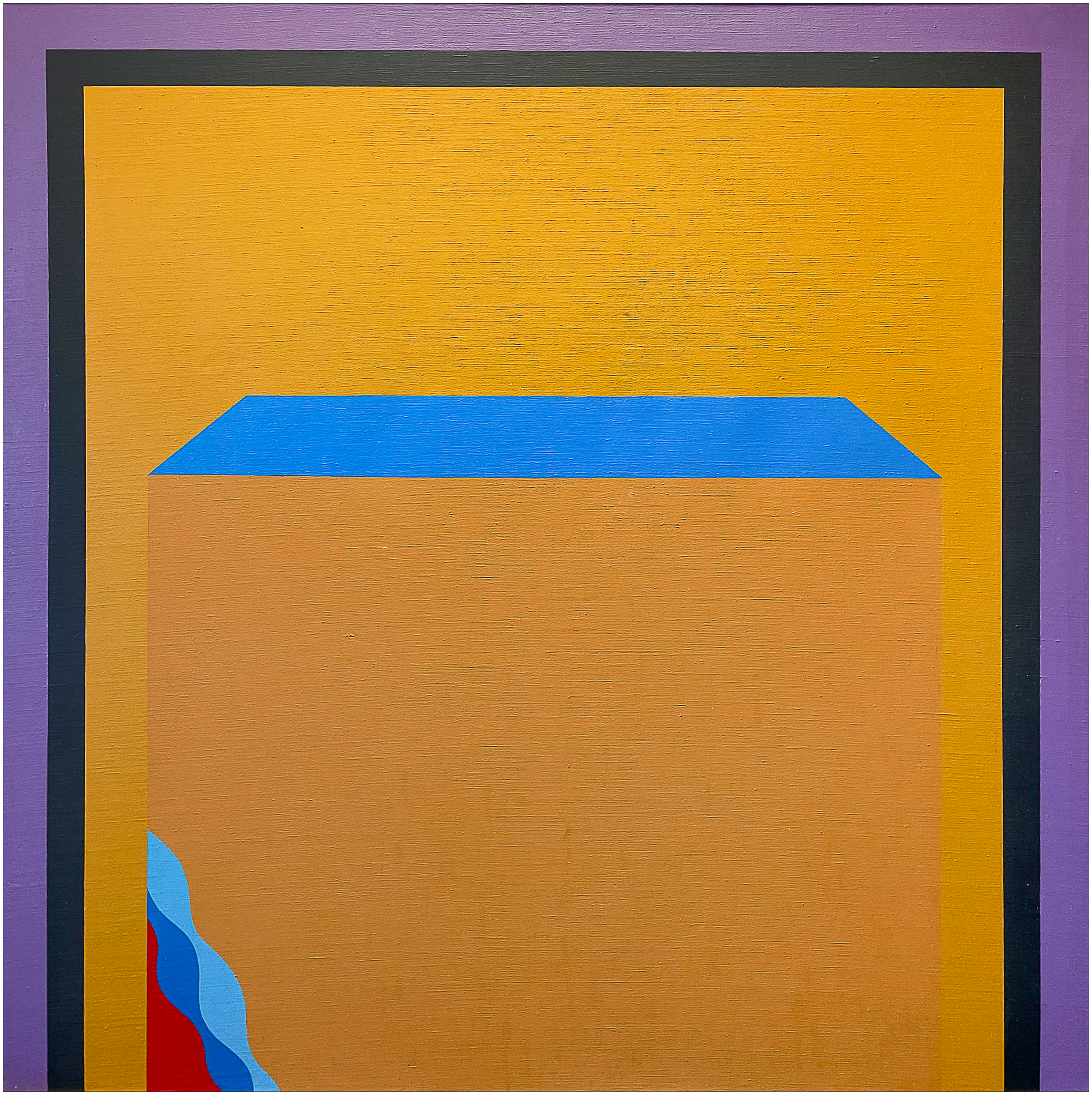
Double Box, 1972. Acrylic on canvas, 22 x 30 in.



Two Boxes, 1970–2. Acrylic on canvas, 21 x 33 in.

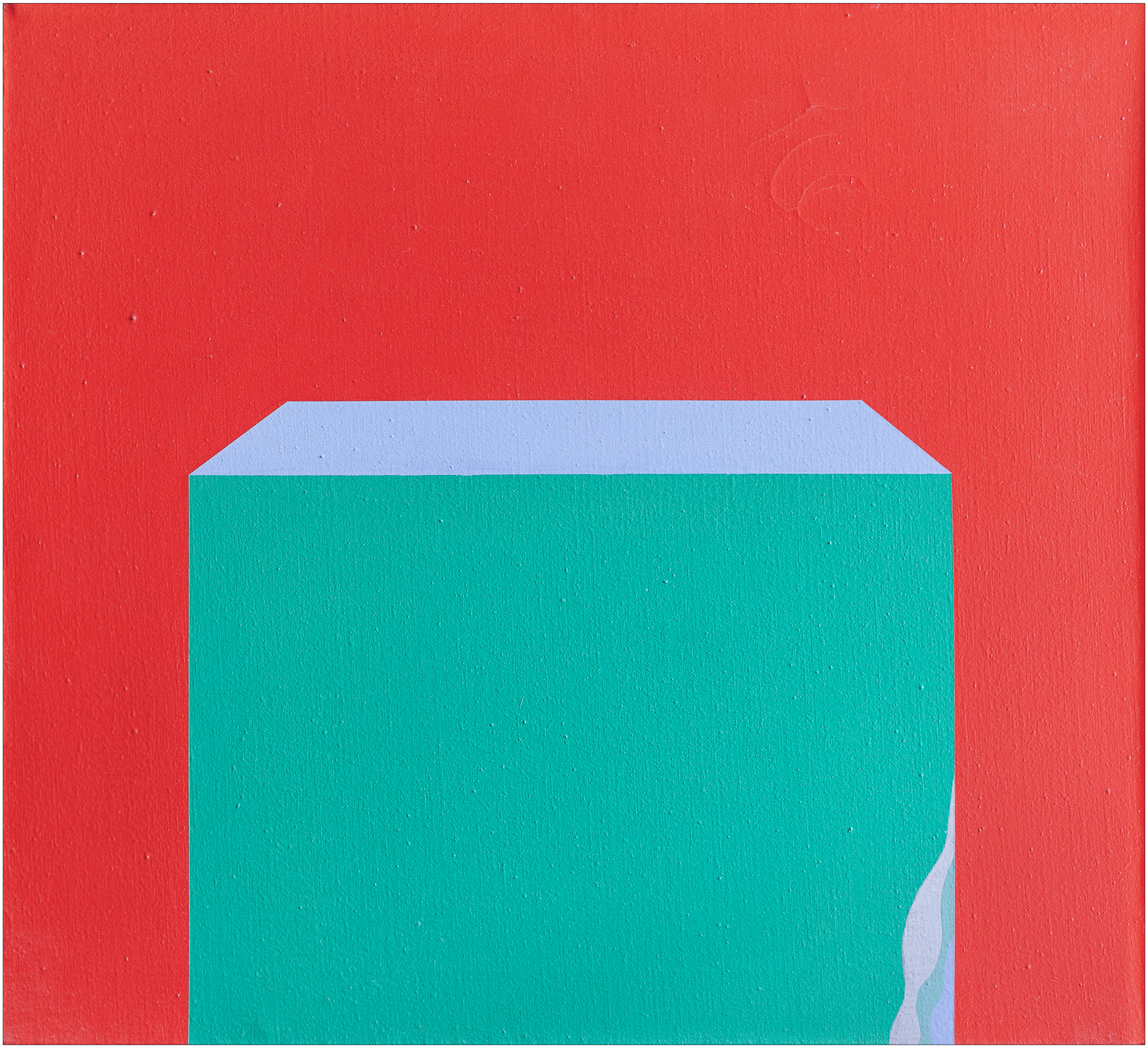


Two Boxes, 1971. Acrylic on canvas.



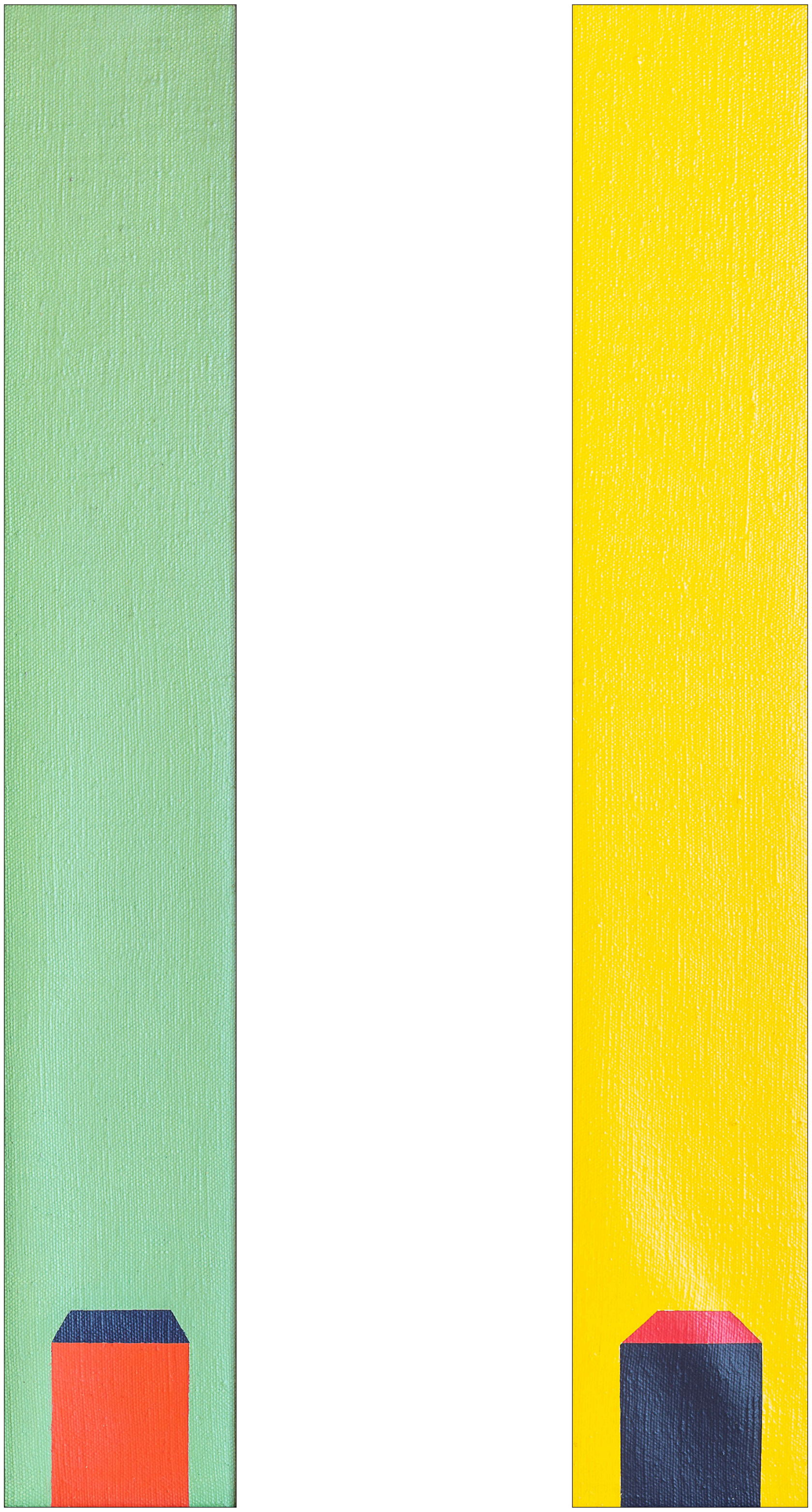
Gold Box

1971. Acrylic on canvas, 45 x 45 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



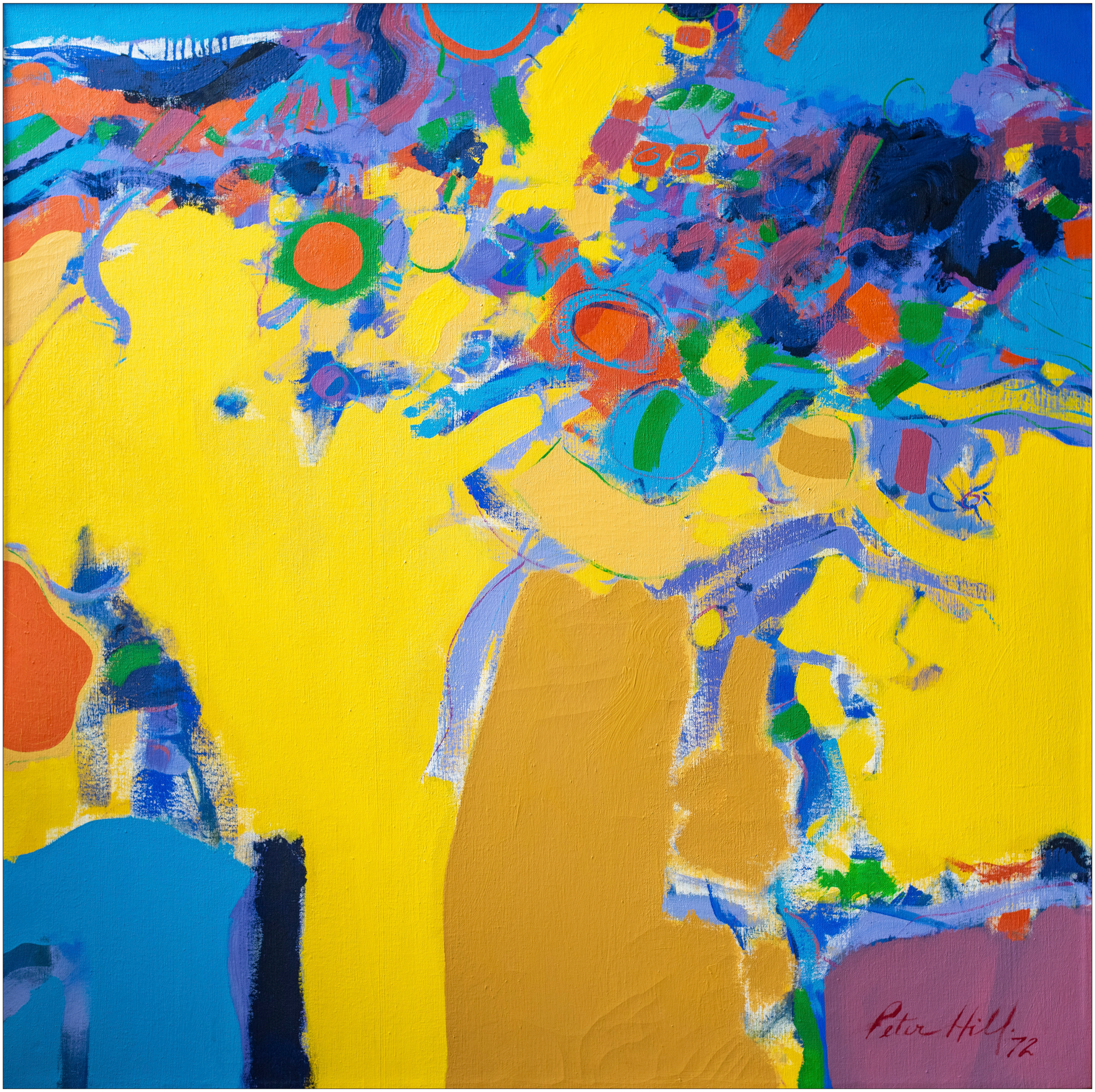
Green Box

1971. Acrylic on canvas, 22 x 24 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman. Canada.



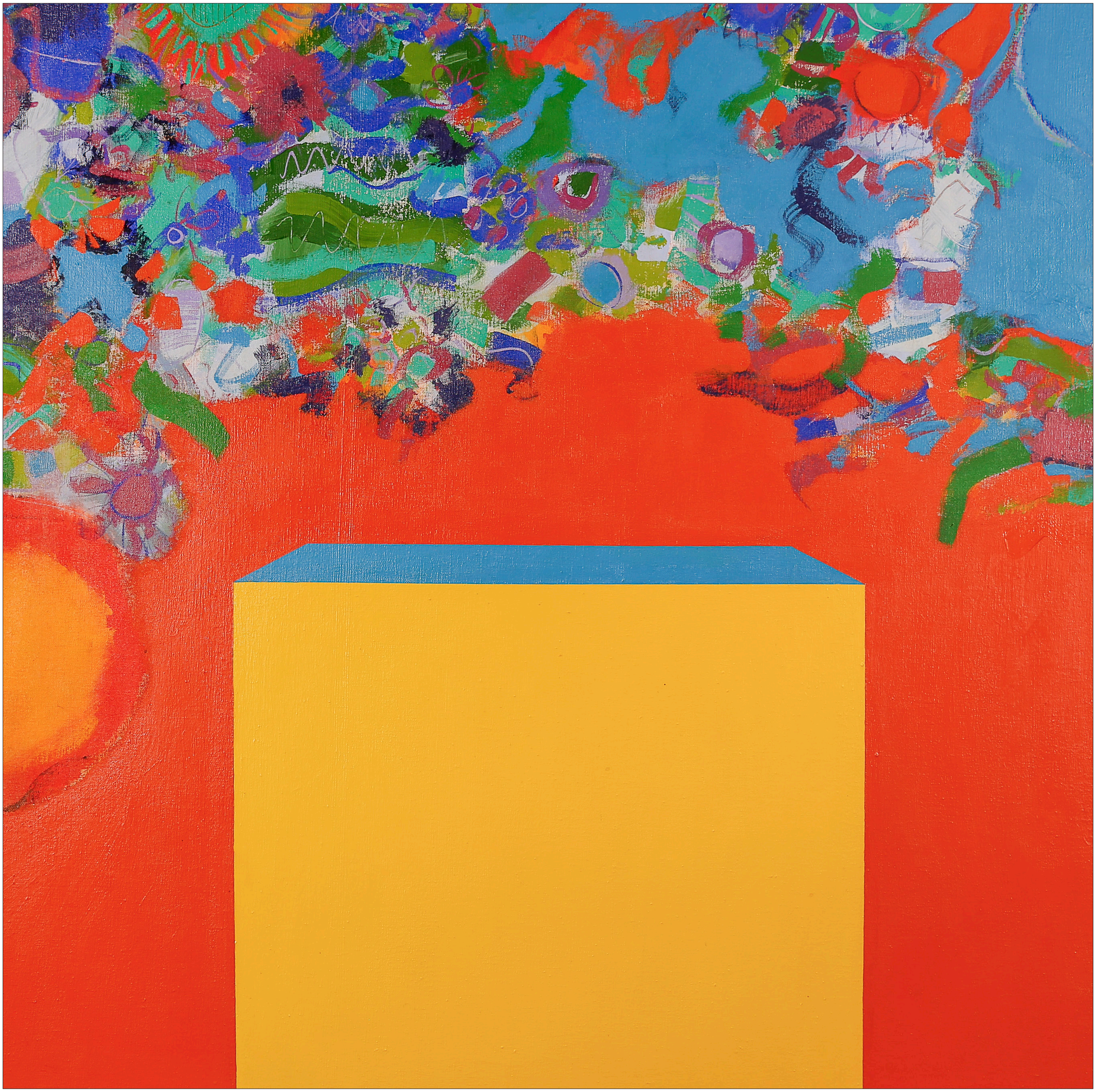
Untitled (Two Paintings)

1971. Acrylic on wood and canvas, both 22 x 3.5 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman. Canada.


Peter Hill '72

Untitled

1972. Acrylic on canvas, 46 x 46 in.
Collection of Anne Kutak and Mary Lou Gifford.



Yellow Box and Flowers

1972. Acrylic on canvas, 43.75 x 45.5 in.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.

Sun Newspaper, November 11, 1971

PETE SEEGER once wrote a song about little boxes in which he said, "There's a green one and a yellow one and a blue one and a purple one and they're all made out of ticky-tacky and they all look just the same."

Though Seeger was making light of crackerbox houses and crackerbox people, of conformity and other modern foibles, he could as easily be writing an unkind review of Peter Hill's new show at Gallery at the Market. That's what it's all about—little boxes here, there and everywhere.

However, we shan't be unkind here. For one thing, Hill's boxes aren't all the same (variations on a theme, he calls them); and for a second, Hill can hardly be accused of conformity. Boxes aren't exactly sweeping the nation.

* * *

HILL'S 45 paintings of perhaps twice that many boxes are showing at the Gallery (102 Howard St.) through Nov. 21. Something he calls his visual poems, made with press-apply letters, accompany the boxes.

Hill, chairman of the University of Nebraska at Omaha's art department, claims to be the city's only Republican artist: "At least, I'm the only one I ever met," he said.

He has a keen and analytical intellect and a subtle sense of humor—seems to enjoy playing the hand the great Fates have dealt him (likes life).

The Gallery show is his first one-man show in Omaha since 1962, but he's not expecting the cards and letters (or money orders) to come pouring in.

"It's in the nature of contemporary art that people don't like it. It's anti-popular by definition," he said.

He wishes that to fill this appreciation void, "the banks and architectural firms would get interested in local art. They should explore it and encourage it." Hill considers his own work very architectural and adds that "over one-fourth of sales in New York galleries are to architectural firms.

"Fortunately, I'm in a position to do it—to go my own way," he said. "I don't have to support myself with my paintings so I can do anything I want—experiment with surfaces—it's a great position to be in."

Hill said that "the university is basically my Medici. They put up with me and I do the best I can for them."

* * *

EXPERIMENTING with surfaces is the key phrase in reacting to his work. He backed off at the comparison to Josef Albers, but both are experimenters with surfaces and relationships by means of a repetitious object. (Albers, of course, is as much a scientist as artist.)

What are the possibilities, the limits of the situation Hill has selected? He works to find them and it shows in his own comments. As he looked at one particularly eye-opening effort, he said: "Doesn't that really fly up at you? Lots of times, I really try to pop them (the boxes) off the canvas."

By the sheer force of his acrylics in battle, he is seeking, in some of the works, to escape the two-dimensional reality. In other cases, he gets more playful, joking with himself about his box theme or manipulating viewer reaction.

Sometimes he is subdued, even intentionally dreary as he understates a new variation. But always the undercurrent of cockeyed humor, of unexpected and surreal approach.

* * *

LOOSE ENDS:

Hill is the owner of the world's largest collection of 1935 Hong Kong dimes. They were dumped before the Japanese advance and salvaged after World War II, coming to him by way of his father. He says he doesn't know if they are worth anything.

He's a big pro football fan, but says football in no way influences his paintings. "Except on Sunday," he interjected.

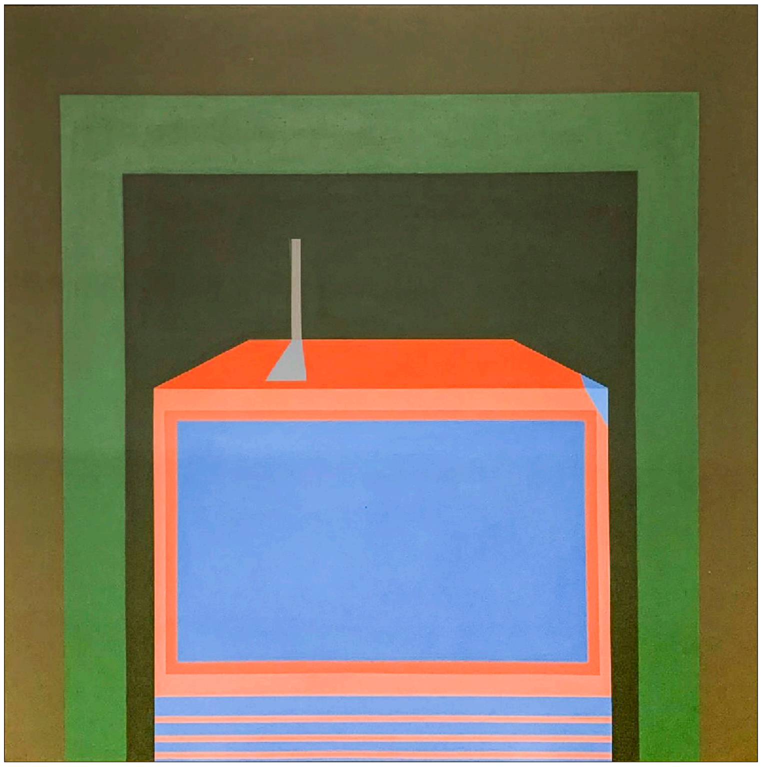
One way he communicates with students is by way of an art department bulletin board in a third-floor hall of the UNO administration building.

A recent addition was an article from the *New York Times* indicating that the human body louse in its various forms is making a strong comeback due to the informal habits and relationships of the young generation.

Is it a warning or a joke? Is Hill laughing or lecturing or maybe both? The answer has to be hidden somewhere in all those boxes, right?

Omaha World-Herald, November 14, 1971

If Artists Are Gloomy, Why Is Peter Hill Cheery?



Brecht wrote: “The man who laughs has not yet heard the news.” And I’ve thought the times haven’t proven him wrong. It’s an attitude reflected in artists today, both in their work and their lives.

Robert Motherwell noted at the “Thirties Decade” symposium at Joslyn Art Museum that, of all his abstract expressionist peers, only four were still alive to enjoy recognition—the rest were dead, most of them either of drink or accidents caused by drink, or by suicide (Rothko and Pollock come immediately to mind).

The artists I’ve known have been by and large a gloomy lot. They have all, without exception, seemed tortured by their perceptions of reality and by their efforts to inform their work with what they have perceived.

That’s why I can’t figure out Peter Hill. By all the criteria of personality and behavior, he shouldn’t be an artist. And his work is exquisite.

In a Box

His most recent paintings from the past two years, which can be seen at the Gallery at the Market through November 21, are box shapes, usually with two or three bands of color around the top and sides of the canvas, with the box in the center.

In terms of expressiveness through form and shape, the work is minimalist. The artist has literally boxed himself in, and must rely mainly on color to achieve an emotional impact.

And impact there is. The austere forms are painted in lush, gorgeous colors: blues and reds and greens and purples that are a feast to the eye in themselves, and in conjunction with each other, are sheer sensual pleasure. Some reds, blues and greens literally sizzle with op effects.

But it isn’t op for op’s sake. In spite of the formal restrictions he has imposed on himself, or perhaps because of the contrast of minimal shapes with dazzling colors, the total effect of the work is that virile exuberance that has always characterized Hill’s work, whether it is the hard-edged abstraction that engrossed him in his earlier paintings, or these “box paintings.”

Concordia Sower, March 17, 1972

Peter Hill Presents Box, Line Paintings in Koenig

Attention all "squares" on campus. I have discovered the perfect place in which to blend, and never be noticed. Interested?

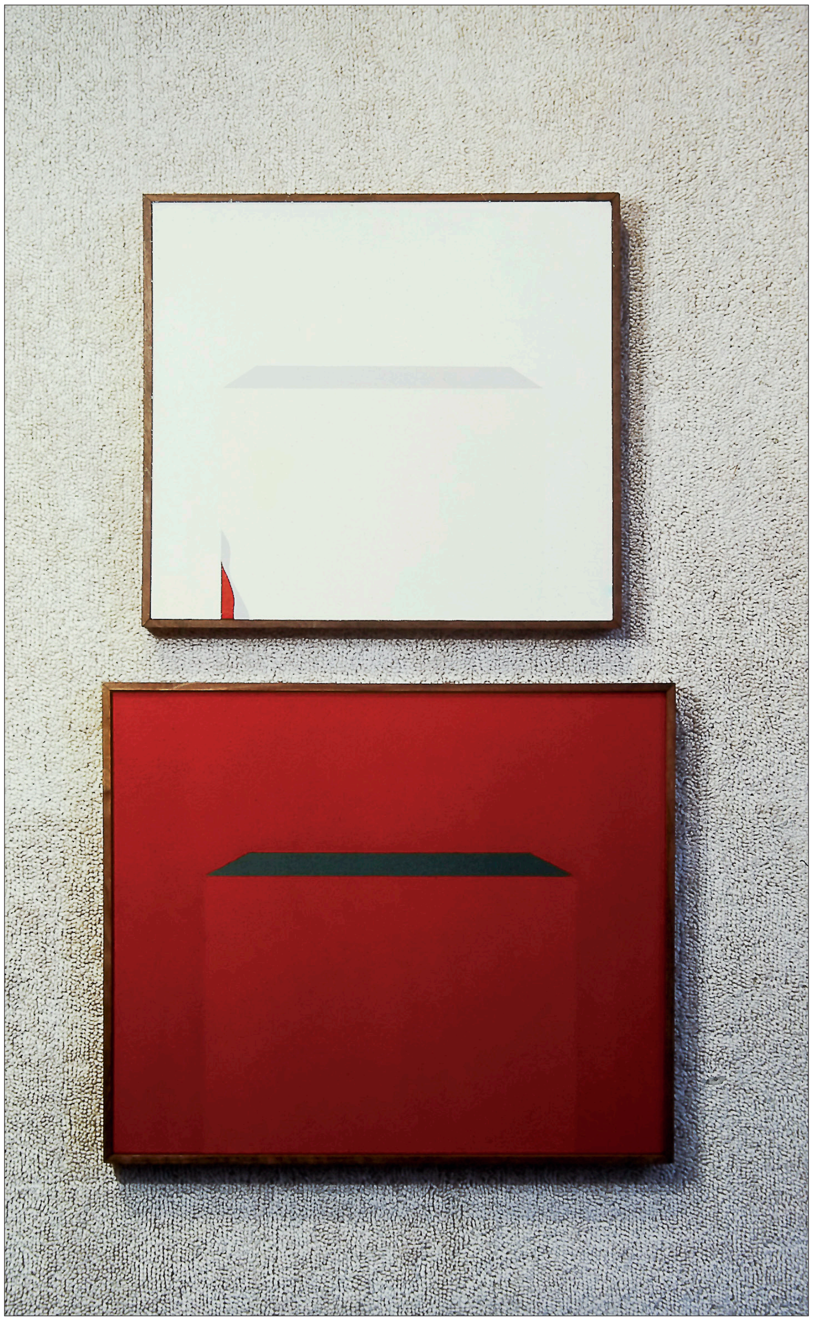
From the fifth of this month through the twenty-fourth, the Koenig Gallery is hosting an exhibition of paintings by Peter Hill, Chairman of the Art Department at the Omaha branch of the University of Nebraska. Some twenty-three odd paintings comprise this exhibit; the majority of them dealing with the single theme of rectangular shapes in a boring display of sameness. This variety even extends to the titling of the works, whose provocative messages include, "Pale Box (Red)," "Two Boxes (Blue)," "Dark Box," as well as the titillating "Red Box (Green Top)"! The showing is not without some excitement however, since it is always amusing to see a facial expression denoting shock when the price of "Red Line" is revealed to be $300.00, or "Two Boxes with Cloud" is selling for only $200.00

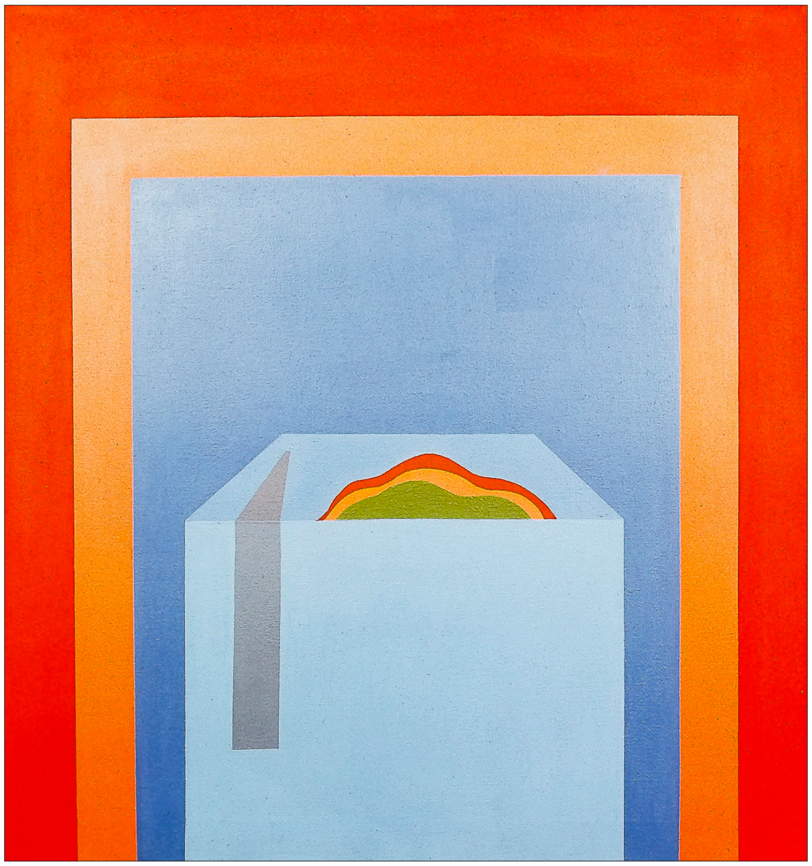
Acrylic Medium

The vast majority of Hill's work is in the acrylic medium, usually in somber darker shades with very small accents on bright unusual tones. These usually appear, as the titles suggest, on the tops of the boxes, although Hill sometimes extends his imagination and places a small triangle or tubular line in the corner or to the side of the ever-present box. One straight edge acrylic does catch the eye in this sea of squares, if only because "Tondo I" (at $250.00) is a circular canvas; certainly a freak among the rest, and seemingly, very out of place. Is there a message to this?

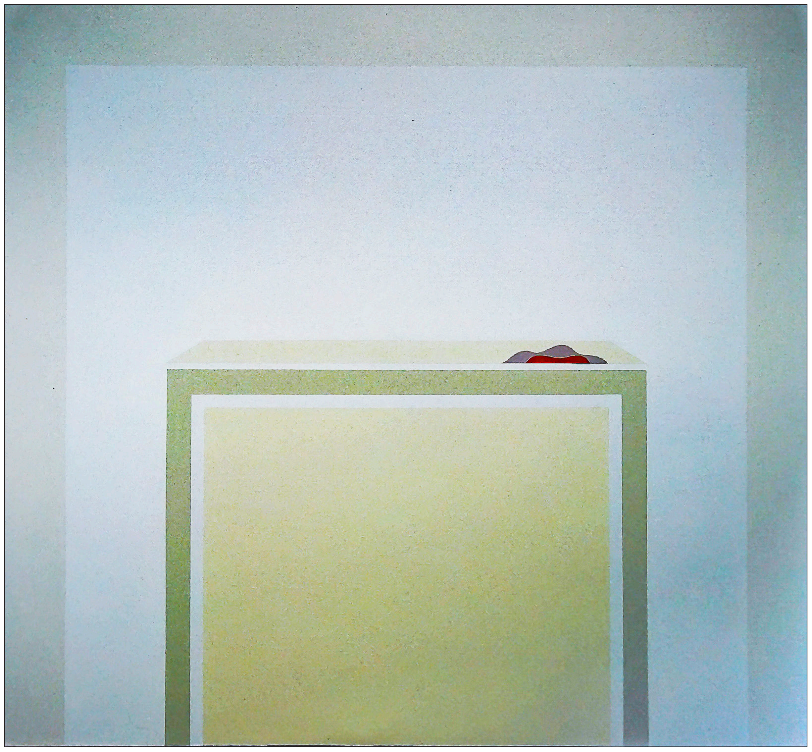
Providing the sole sparks of variety in this sea of mono-theme are six works classified as mixed media. Apparently Hill's idea of "mixed media" tends to be pen, ink, and pencil. These DO provide a needed change, and the white surfaces with the ping-pong ball effect scattered here and there do satisfy to a certain extent the gallery patrons' craving. Prices on these range from $100.00 for an untitled collection of circles in pencil to "Purge" for $150.00 as well as "O Yes" and "Smart" each priced at $200.00; all in the "ping-pong ball" motif. [See p. 212.]

Although not a professional consultant for artistic endeavors, I would suggest that Mr. Hill branch out. Even though his paintings are remarkably varied within the limitations presented by a box on canvas, they leave a little to be desired in the "creative thinking" department. If Mr. Hill continues in this vein, I'm afraid even you "squares" may have to find another hide-out!

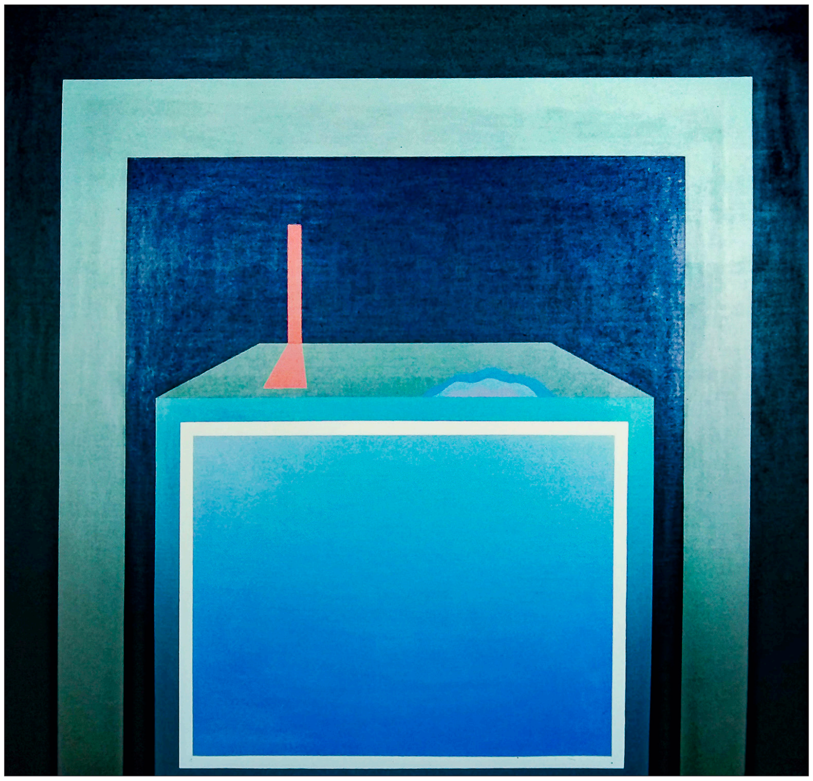




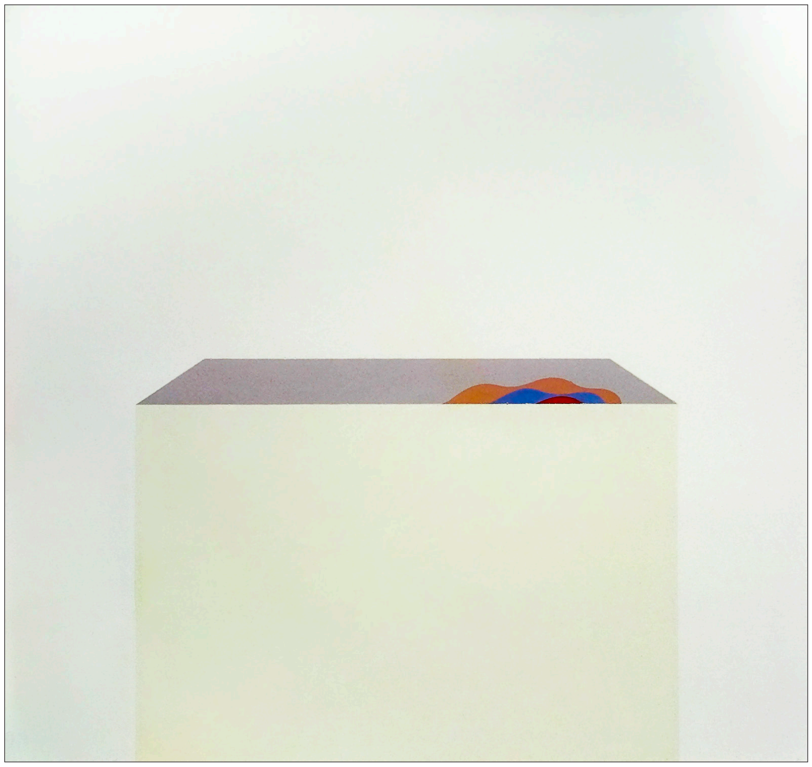
Box, 1972. Acrylic on canvas.



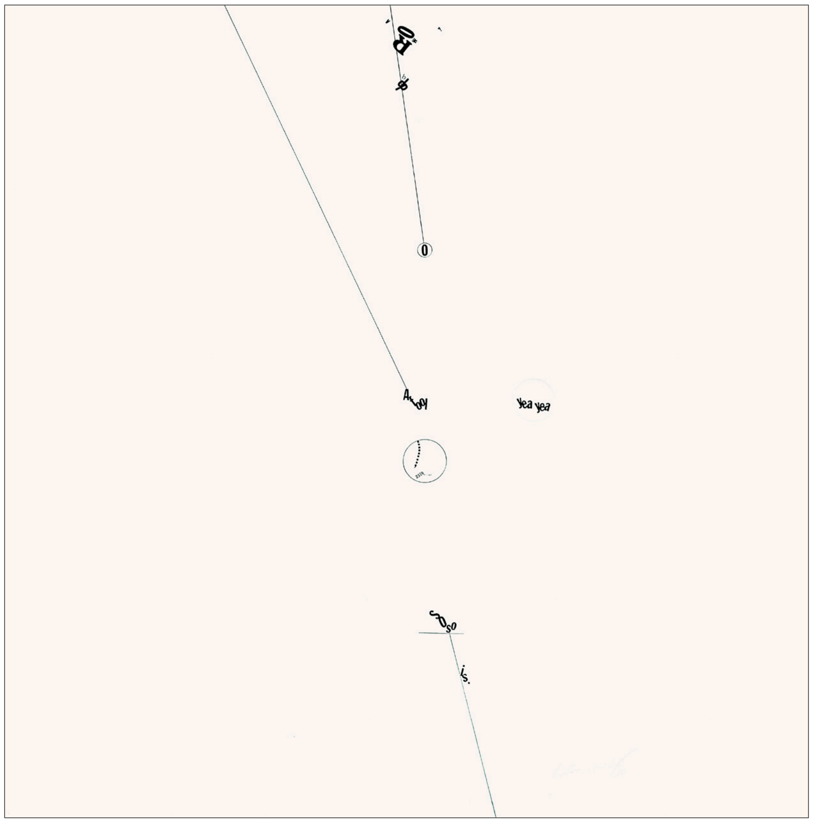
Pale Box I, 1972. Acrylic on canvas, 37 x 35 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



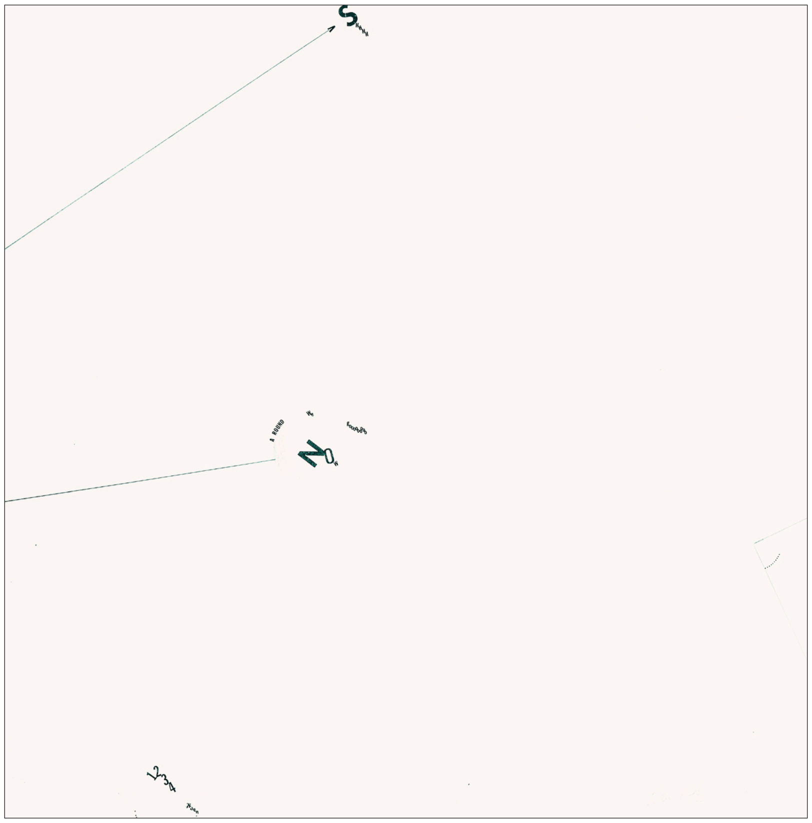
Untitled, 1972. Acrylic on canvas.



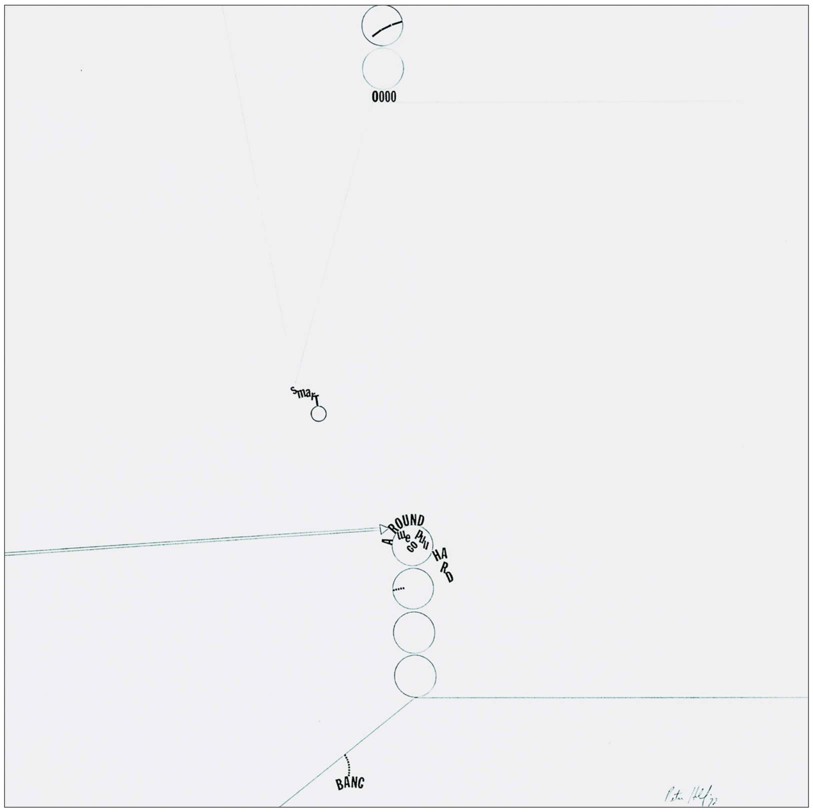
Pale Box II, 1972. Acrylic on canvas, 34 x 36 in.



Yea Yea, 1971. Graphite, press letters, posterboard, 30 x 30 in. Collection of Joan C. Hill.



Shhhh, 1972. Graphite, press letters, posterboard, 30 x 30 in. Collection of Joan C. Hill.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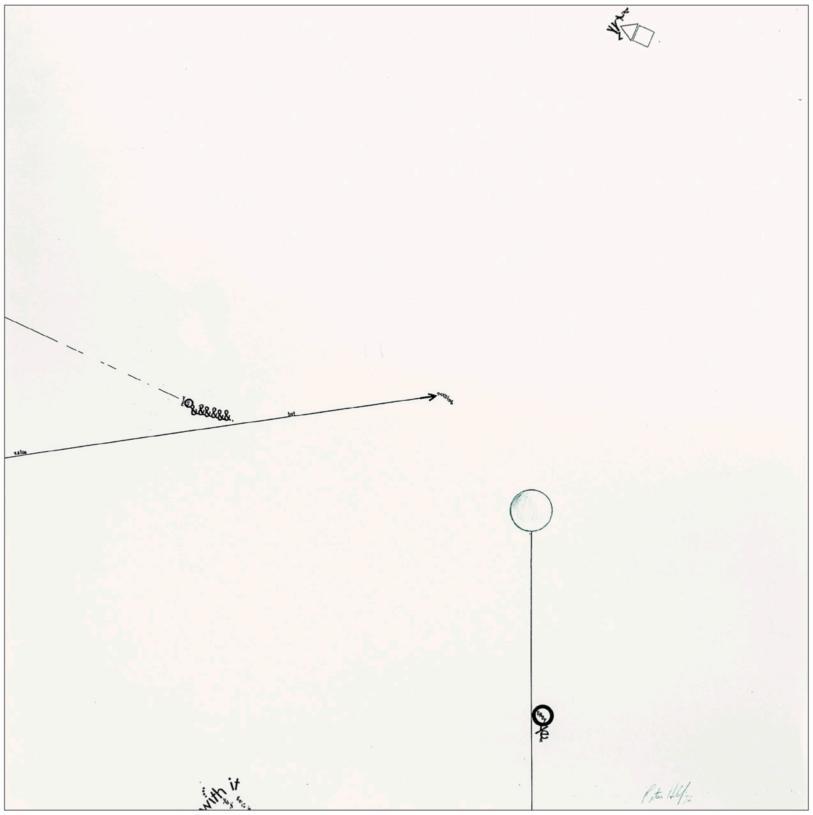
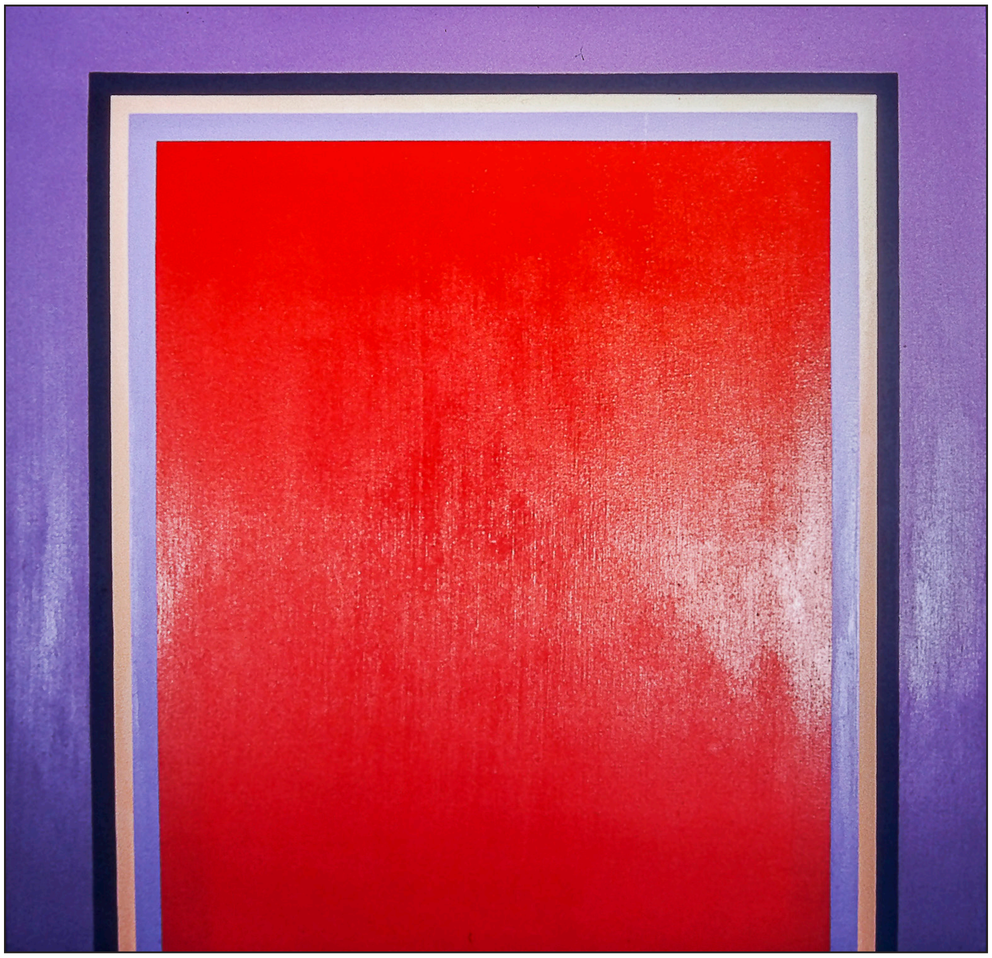
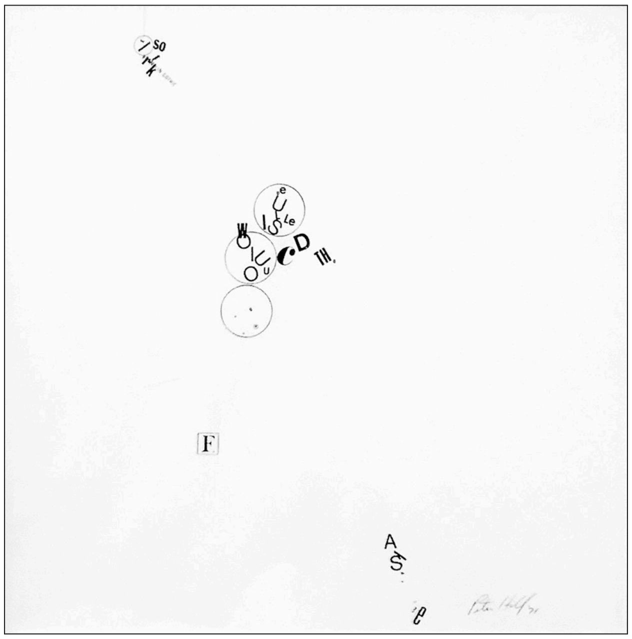
Smart, 1972. Graphite, press letters, posterboard, 30 x 30 in. Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



O, Yes. 1972. Graphite, press letters, posterboard, Collection of Gina and Terry Mitchell.



Untitled, 1972. Oil on canvas.

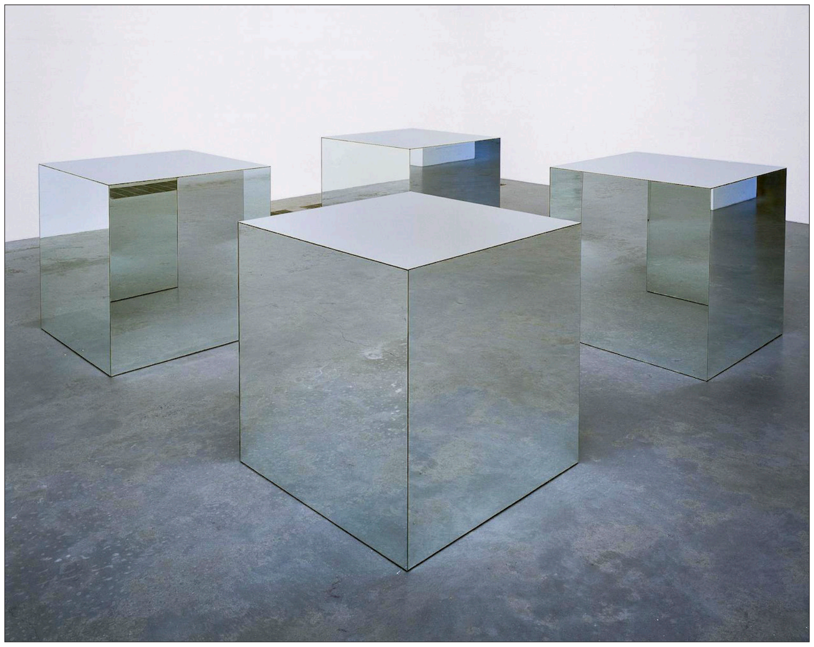


I.O.U., 1971. Mixed media, 18.5 x 18.5 in.
Collection of Katy and Jon Welles.

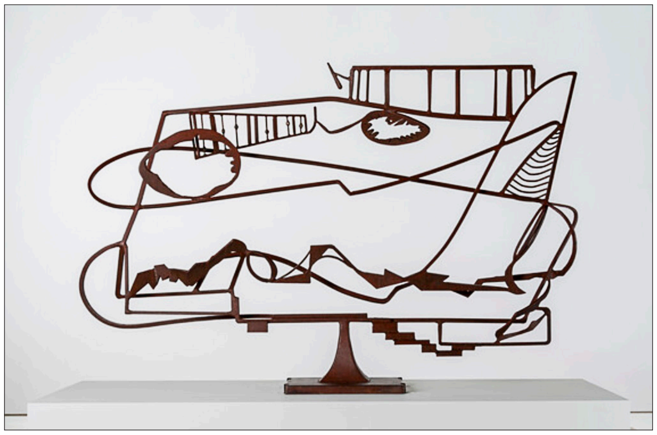
Boxes and Minimalism, Revisited

I mentioned earlier that the Box paintings were my father's response to Minimalism. Let's get past the obvious point that "they're boxes" and dig deeper.

One of Minimalism's goals was to shape space and make viewers aware of their own bodies in relationship to the artwork. In other words, the viewers' bodies (and their perceptions of their bodies) became part of the art experience. Robert Morris's *Mirrored Cubes* of 1965 illustrates this nicely.

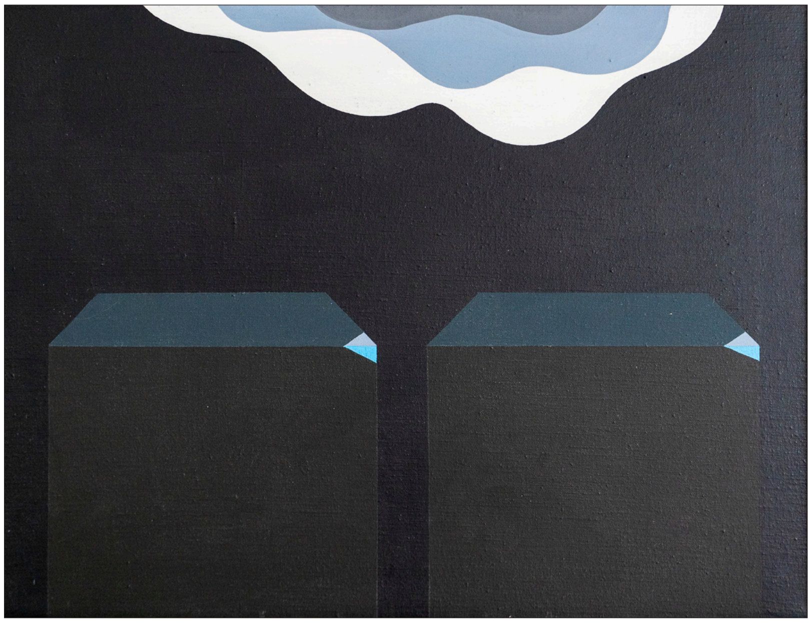


One of Modernism's goals, in contrast, was to produce items that had their own internal logics, produced their own little creative universes. Again, it's what's inside that counts—for example, in David Smith's *Hudson River Landscape* (1951), below.

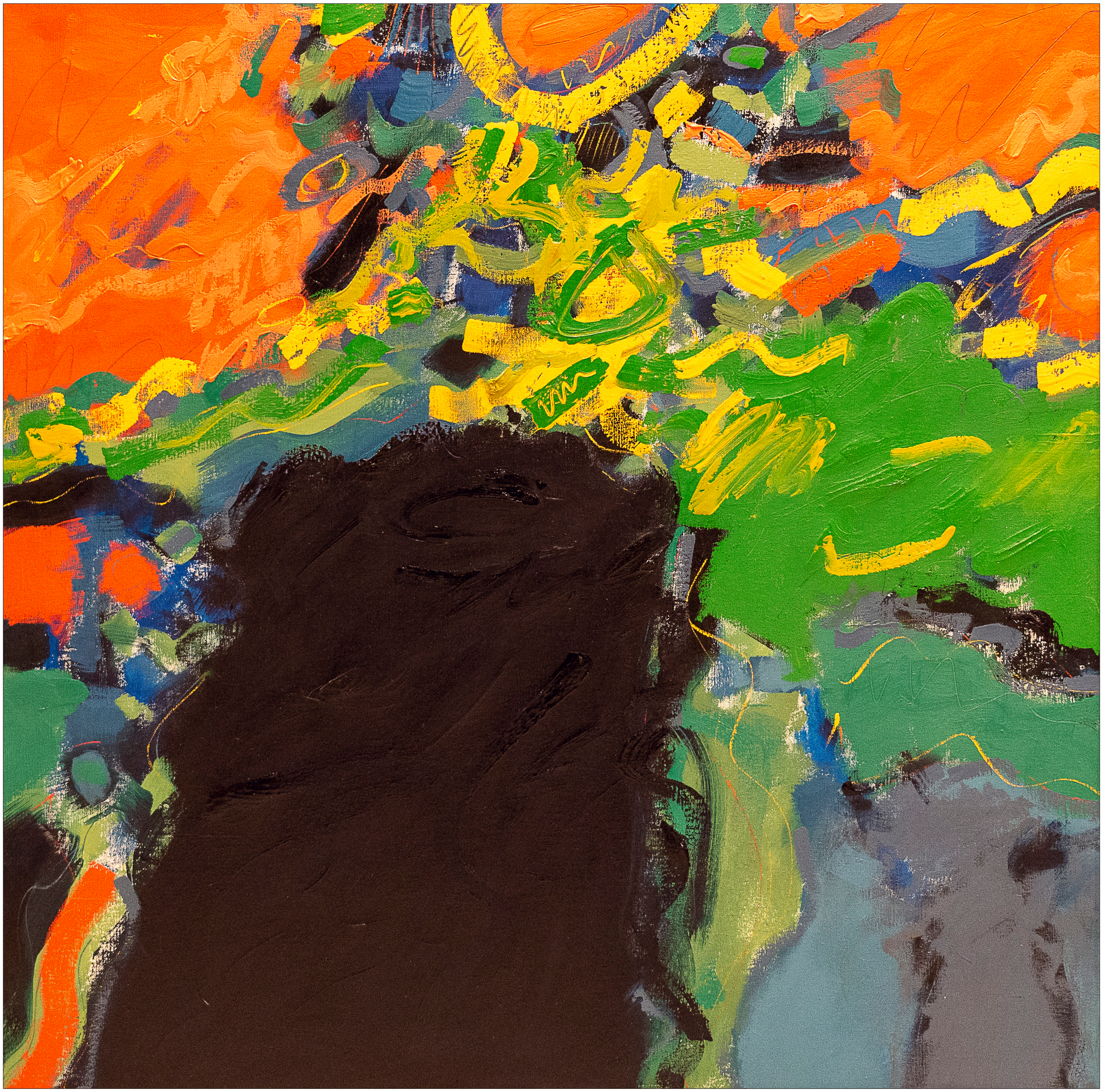


So what'd my Modernist dad draw from Minimalism? I think he picked up on an understated strain in its sculpture—a weird feeling some critics would voice, then drop. After describing these industrial objects as mute, anti-expressive, and anti-Modern, those critics would also say (practically as an aside) that the objects were weird, unnerving, or uncanny. They'd say this—it was likely a reaction to having to think about their own bodies as things relating to other things—and then they'd say no more. It was a feeling, after all, and feelings were for Modernists.

I think my father picked up on those barely hidden feelings elicited by Minimalism and ran with it. Dad's boxes aren't just objects. They're presences in a weird and airless space. Shapes creep up, waves wobble, corners glow, odd miasmas descend—it's usually some combination of all those. The boxes and their environs are mysterious, even eerie.



In 1976, talking about his latest fixation—pyramids—my father would say this: "At this point in my art it could be said that I lean heavily on a Surrealist attitude." It's fair to say that by "Surreal" my dad means "mysterious and otherworldly"—although for their surreality, the pyramid paintings rely on an uncanny and dreamlike doubling. (Read your Freud.) But "mysterious and otherworldly" apply just as well to his Boxes, which were what happened when our artist experienced Minimalism's unexplored feelings and said, "Hunh. I wonder what I can make of that?"



Untitled

1972. 42 x 42 in.
Collection of Eddie Wintroub.

Sun Newspaper, March 16, 1972

Hill Pushes Self-Aspiration in Art Classes

IN THE CLASSROOM . . . Hill and student Tom Andrew discuss the history of Western art.

Looking at paintings in UNO student shows and on classroom walls, one is struck by the high quality of the work. The observation is partially supported by the fact that in the upcoming 12th Midwest Biennial involving 16 states, at Joslyn Museum, there will be 13 Omahans represented, eight of whom (mostly painters) are or were students at UNO.

Was this just a good year or is there something more consistent involved? If the latter is true (and UNO students have numbered prominently in other Joslyn biennials), what are the ingredients that produce such a favorable result? Undoubtedly four things must be involved: facilities, program, instructor and the students.

Painting facilities consist of a room on the third floor of the Administration Building. Filled with easels and student work of varying subject matters and styles, the room displays the usual disarray of deliberately and accidentally painted surfaces. There seems to be nothing special about this art room.

* * *

ACCORDING TO THE art program, the student can take painting or other advanced courses only after he completes 12 hours of credit in design and drawing.

To earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree (there is no graduate program in art at UNO), he will need 66 credits, 18 of these in the history of art. The program is strong and sound.

Peter Hill, painting instructor, doesn't look like the "stereotype" artist or art instructor. Clean-shaven, and casually, but neatly dressed in slacks and shirt (or suit), he is buoyant in spirit and energetic in movement in contrast to the more melancholic demeanor of many people involved in art. Hill is well-known as a professional artist working in a "hard-edge" style.

In his 13th year of teaching, Hill has classes in elementary, intermediate and advanced painting. At the elementary level, students do not generally have a developed concept of what they want to do in art.

At this stage Hill stresses technical aspects. First, the student learns how to paint. Hill emphasizes the prerequisite and continuing need for design and drawing as a basis for the student's work.

Occasionally, he asks a student to stop painting completely and hands him a pile of paper to draw on. Also at this level, Hill exposes students to a variety of work by other artists shown in the UNO Gallery and via slides; because as he says, "you never know what will hit them."

* * *

PERHAPS IN the second or third semester of work (or later), the student begins to make judgments about what he wants to paint. At this second level, Hill feels that students must be "guided not indoctrinated, because art is such a personal thing." Nor does he over-encourage students, as he feels they have to be "self-encouraged." He tells them, "proceed at your own risk."

The life of the artist and the student artist is "not a romantic one." As Hill is quick to point out, painting, drawing, sculpting or whatever means a combination of work and frustration and the mortality rate for those that continue to work in art is high.

As students develop in technique and in finding a subject, concept or imagery for their work, "self-direction" becomes a necessity. Hill tries to get students "to come to grips with themselves" in terms of choosing and painting that view of life that is uniquely their own. He emphasizes personal honesty, not only in choosing an image but in rendering it.

"No student works hard enough for me," Hill says, and almost in the same breath, "it's not whether you make it, but whether you love doing it."

Hill pushes advanced students for a finished or polished product—a step toward professionalism. Some more mature students become "uptight" about selling their work, but Hill believes the artist works not to sell, "but to do another thing because you wonder what that thing will be." If the student reaches this frame of mind, he is what Hill calls "hooked" and paints all the time without regard for credit, grade or sale.

* * *

HILL HOLDS the common feeling among art instructors that you can't "teach" art. The best situation he says occurs when a class of students begins to "snowball" or to feed on itself. In this climate, students influence one another, change and develop because of and in relation to their classmates.

Student reactions in the elementary section were generally eager and positive. These people repeatedly mentioned the "open-mindedness" of their instructor, his emphasis on drawing and his explicit criticisms in plain terms that they could understand and act upon.

They also talked about aesthetical and philosophical points of view. As one major working in a more academic, figurative vein, Mike Mitchell, put it: "Sometimes it's hard to get him off it."

As she worked to better a painting design drawn on paper, Mary Schafer, a quiet art education major, expressed appreciation for Hill's "human" manner of criticism. She said he stressed technique, but that he said, "then you take over."

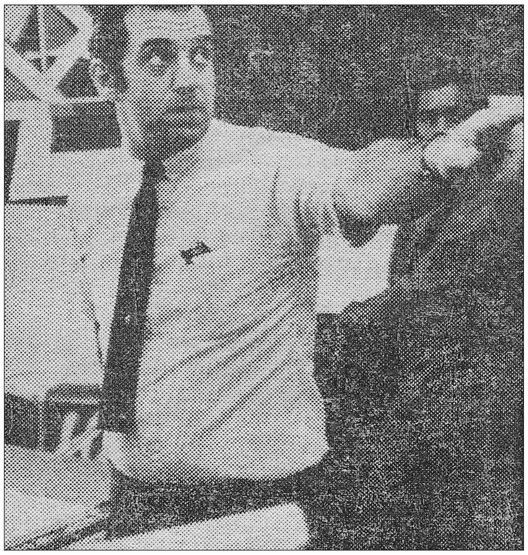
She continued to quote him: "Tell me what you like—then paint it. You may not like it later, but what's important is what you like now." She added that he encouraged students to see shows at Joslyn and to visit galleries.

* * *

OPINIONS on the intermediate level varied to a greater degree than on the elementary level. These people were more critical, perhaps reflecting their own indecisive stage in art. Diane Bucknell, painting a "hard-edge," felt a lack of critical attention; but said that as she worked under Hill, her own seriousness about her work increased.

As she worked on an abstraction, Ginny Coufal emphasized Hill's fondness for figurative work, in spite of his own "hard-edge" style. By way of contrast, John Campbell felt that he was not encouraged in working with the human figure; however, he said that generally Hill tried to head the student into a direction that was natural to and comfortable for that individual.

Advanced students' opinion was less varied and more positive, reflecting the view of those who had "made it," so to speak, in terms of the UNO program, who could reflect on their educational experience, and who wanted to go on in art.



IN ACTION . . . Hill makes suggestion.

Andy Acker, a senior, is one student "hooked" on painting. Although he has finished formal classes, he continues to paint about 25 hours a week and hopes to go to grad school. Acker's work is figurative in a "Pop-ish" vein. He and other advanced students have been encouraged to show their work in exhibitions.

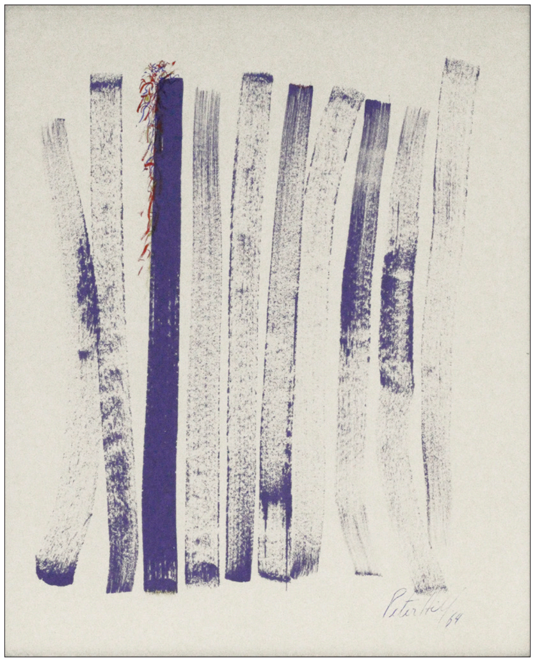
* * *

PAT ROBBINS, a junior, works in a surrealist, figurative style and also wants to go to grad school. He commented on Hill's emphasis upon the "personal" element in art. He felt the philosophy of the department was to do or try something new and to move ahead.

Hill is enthusiastic about teaching and is concerned for students. He emphasizes professionalism and his students can relate to him as a productive, professional artist. He says: "I like to teach because I'm involved in the same problems they are." In such an environment of guidance and instruction, student success is possible, and is evident.

Remembrance by Lynn Turner Sousley

Lynn Turner Sousley is the niece of Allan Garfinkle, a lawyer who worked at the Kutak firm from the 1970s to the 1990s. Lynn graduated from the University of Missouri—Columbia and then worked for Hallmark, Countrywide, and H&R Block. She is also the mother of Slater Sousley, an artist currently practicing in the Midwest. Hers is the only remembrance of my father that is not by a previous student; her experience captures something important about my father, the experience of art, and her.



Untitled, 1964.
Ink and gouache on paper, 15.5 x 12.5 in.
Collection of Lynn Turner Sousley.

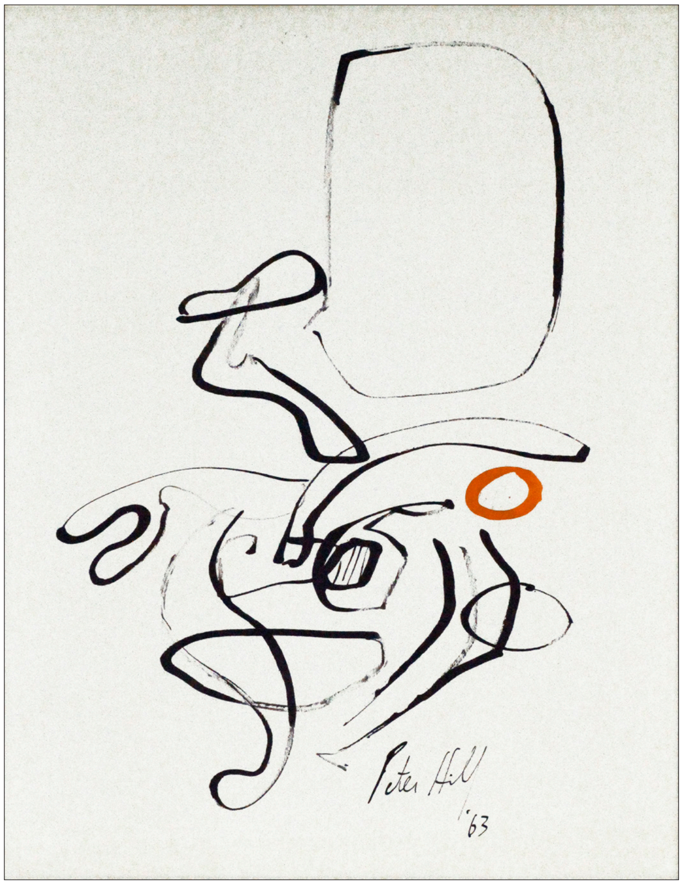
I was 12. My mom, dad, and I were visiting my uncle in Omaha. This particular trip included a special itinerary event—an invitation to the home of professor and artist Peter Hill.

I don't remember anything about the meal. What I do remember is the special treat we were afforded: a private showing of Peter's artwork. I specifically remember Peter opening the drawers to his flat files and welcoming me to peruse the contents. I was hooked! Peter engaged me in conversation and ultimately asked me about which pieces caught my eye. That was tough to answer, as so many did.

Two pieces in particular stood out to me. I summoned the nerve to ask the sale price. $75.00 each. To a broke 12-year-old, while I knew that was reasonable, it seemed totally out of reach. Peter's soft spot for a young art lover unveiled itself. He first asked me to choose my favorite (not an easy decision), and then asked me if I thought I could manage sending $7.50-monthly installments for ten months. I felt determined to earn enough babysitting money and save my allowance to honor the deal he was making with me. Keeping to our arrangement, I mailed $7.50 monthly, for ten months.

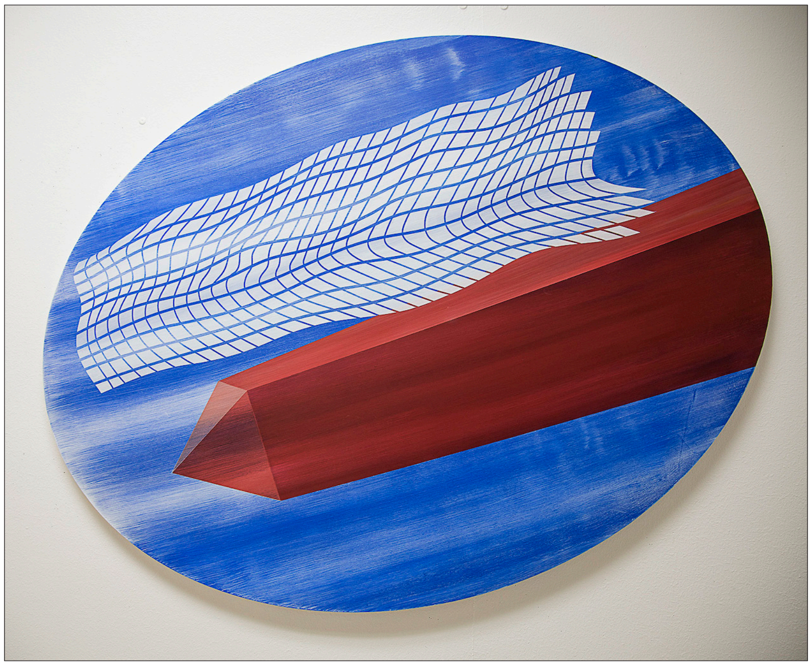
And a week later, I was beyond excited when the mail tube arrived with my name on it. I pulled the tape and popped open the endcap. To my uncontrollable surprise, Peter had sent me *both* of my favorite pieces! Such a genuine act of kindness and generosity! Thus launched my lifelong appreciation of and passion for collecting art.

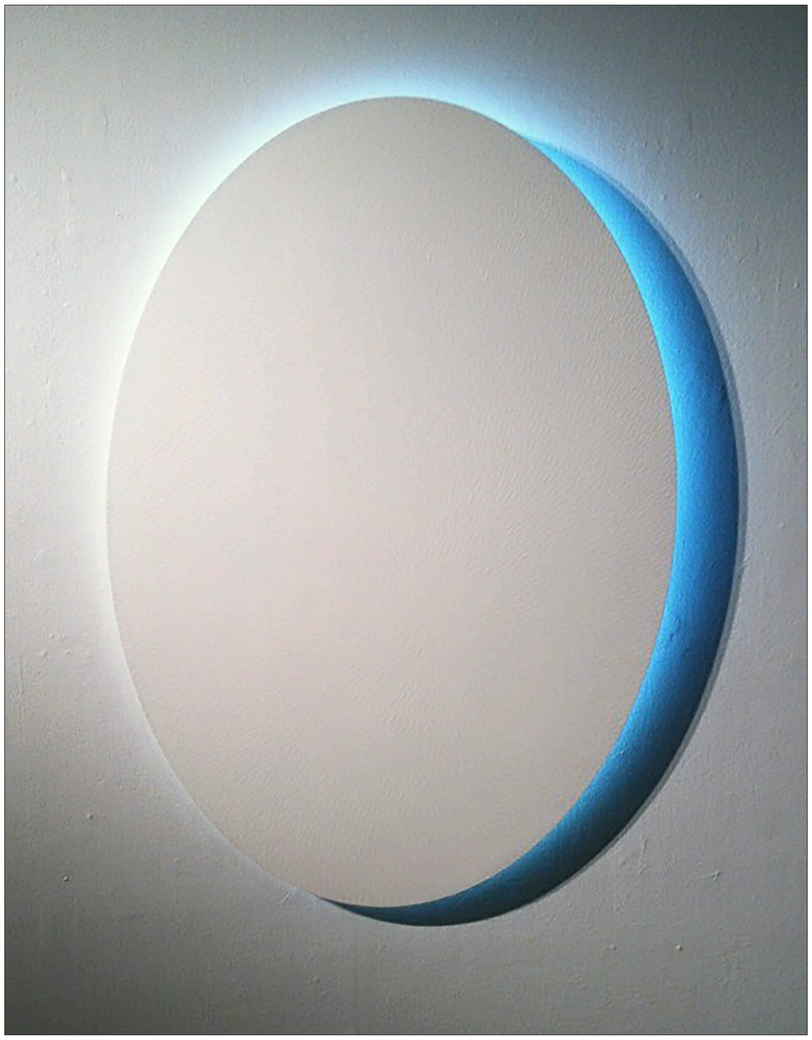
—Lynn Turner Sousley



Untitled, 1963. Ink on paper, 22 x 17 in.
Collection of Lynn Turner Sousley

Remembrance by Robert Hower


Robert Hower, *Light, Field, Passageway*. Acrylic, 58 x 40 in.


Robert Hower, *Blue*, 2018. Acrylic and neon, 48 x 38 in.

Robert Hower graduated from UNO in the early 1970s and attended the Cranbrook Academy of Art from 1973 to 1975. After a stint at Chase Manhattan Bank, he returned to academia to teach at Millikin University, Kansas State University, and the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA). He is Professor and Chair Emeritus of Art and Art History at UTA.

Intelligence, insightfulness, high energy, thoughtful, and encouraging—all the characteristics you want in an instructor—Peter Hill possessed at the highest level. Peter was my educational and career mentor. He had a major impact on the evolution of my work, the pursuit of advanced degrees, and my administrative personality. Peter's career was carefully reviewed and analyzed by me due to his thoughts on contemporary art and the impact of Cranbrook Academy of Art on his creative journey.

There are numerous stories about Peter that would explore the person and the impact that he had on his students. One day during my first year in his painting class he walked me over to the library to show me exceptional design publications that I should be familiar with. He could have provided the names, but he went the extra effort to discuss why the publications were important. He was always upbeat and dynamic in his interaction with students. One day I brought my drawings to his office for review. After the session he reached over behind his desk and handed me a ream of drawing paper and said he looked forward to the next set of ideas. One of the works was accepted into the "Drawings USA" Exhibition at the Minnesota Museum of American Art and purchased for their collection. Peter inspired.

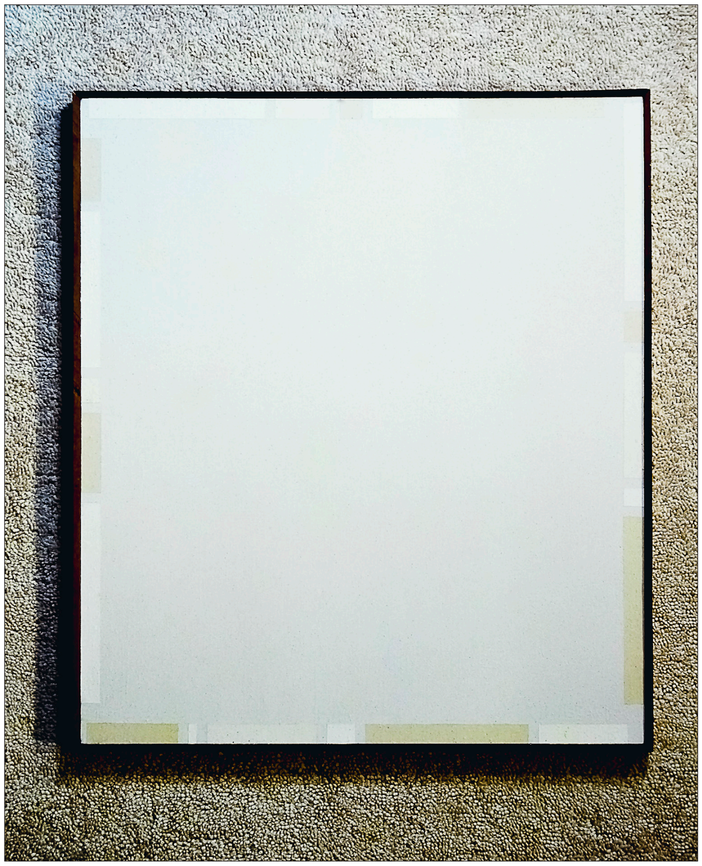
Peter Hill's imprint on the University of Nebraska at Omaha Art and Art History Department will last for decades. The students that he nurtured are continuing to expand the reach of his creative philosophy internationally. The blend of his art history knowledge and studio work continues to silently inform future artists.

—Robert Hower

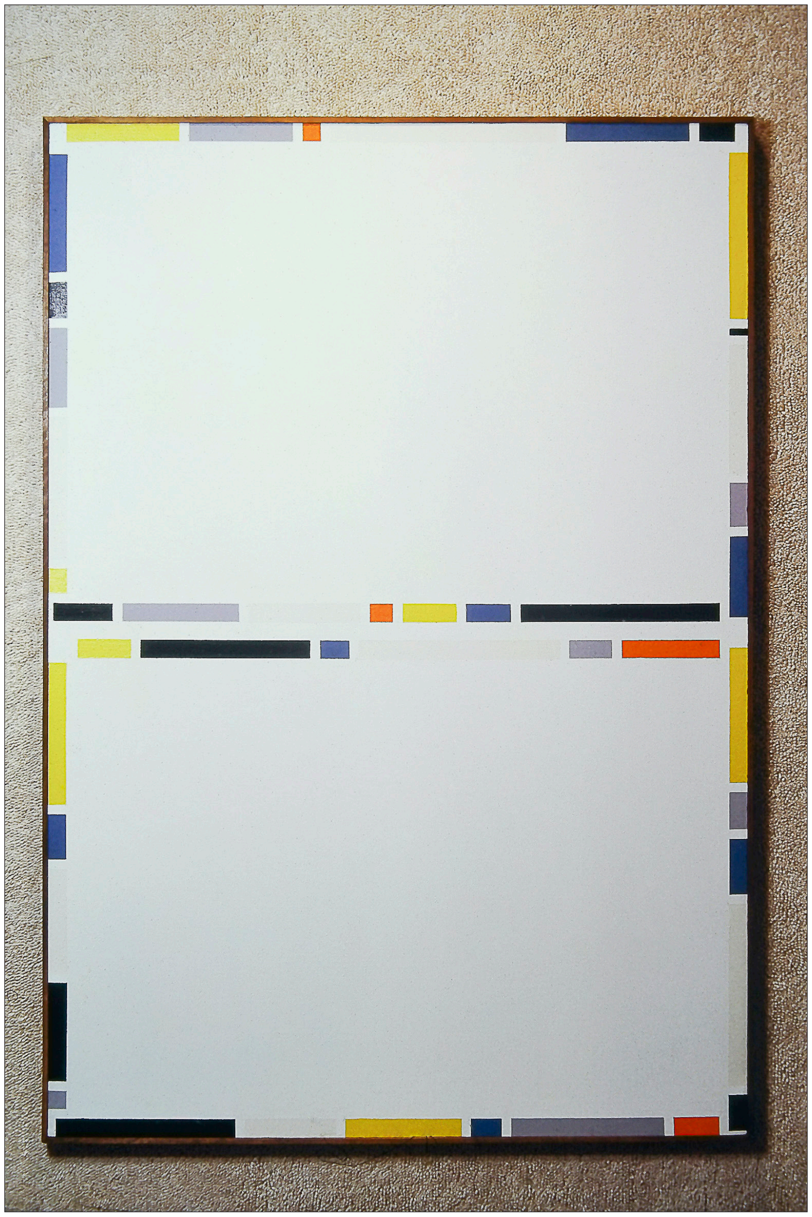
Edge Paintings: 1972 to 1974

From 1972 to 1974, my father made a series of what he called "edge paintings," shown on these three pages. In December 1972, he exhibited the earliest of these paintings in the Elder Gallery at Wesleyan University in Lincoln, Nebraska; those paintings are shown hanging on the carpeted walls of that gallery. Unlike most of my dad's paintings, these works render better within their surroundings, at least to my eyes, which is how I show them here.

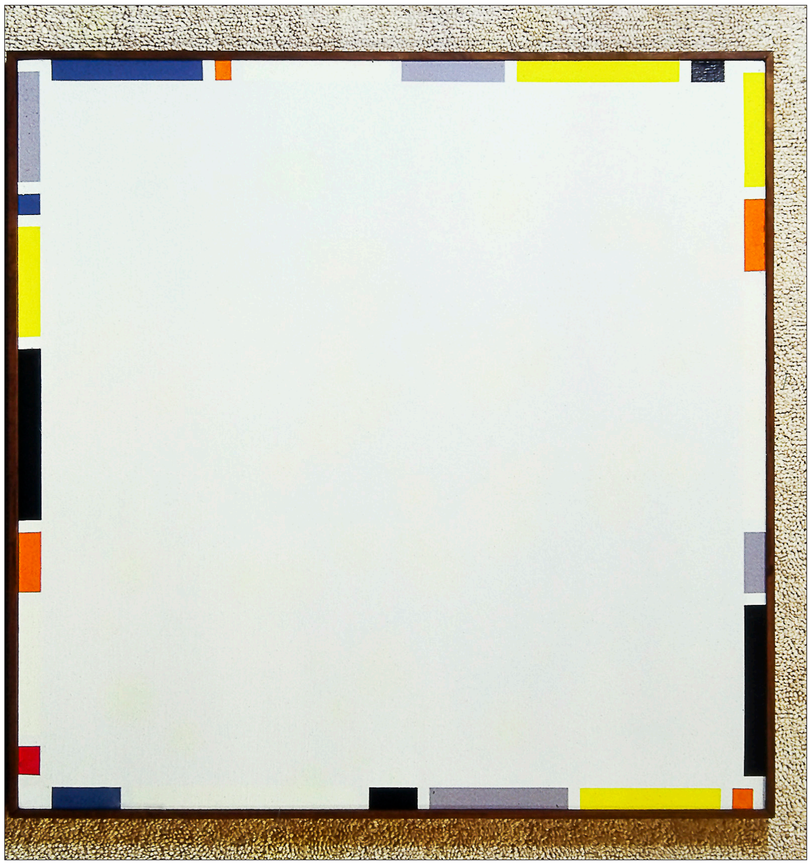
I deeply regret not being able to locate and photograph even one of these works, as they are among my favorites. It's as if Piet Mondrian let the Northern European austereness drop so he could have a little fun and let the color green back in.



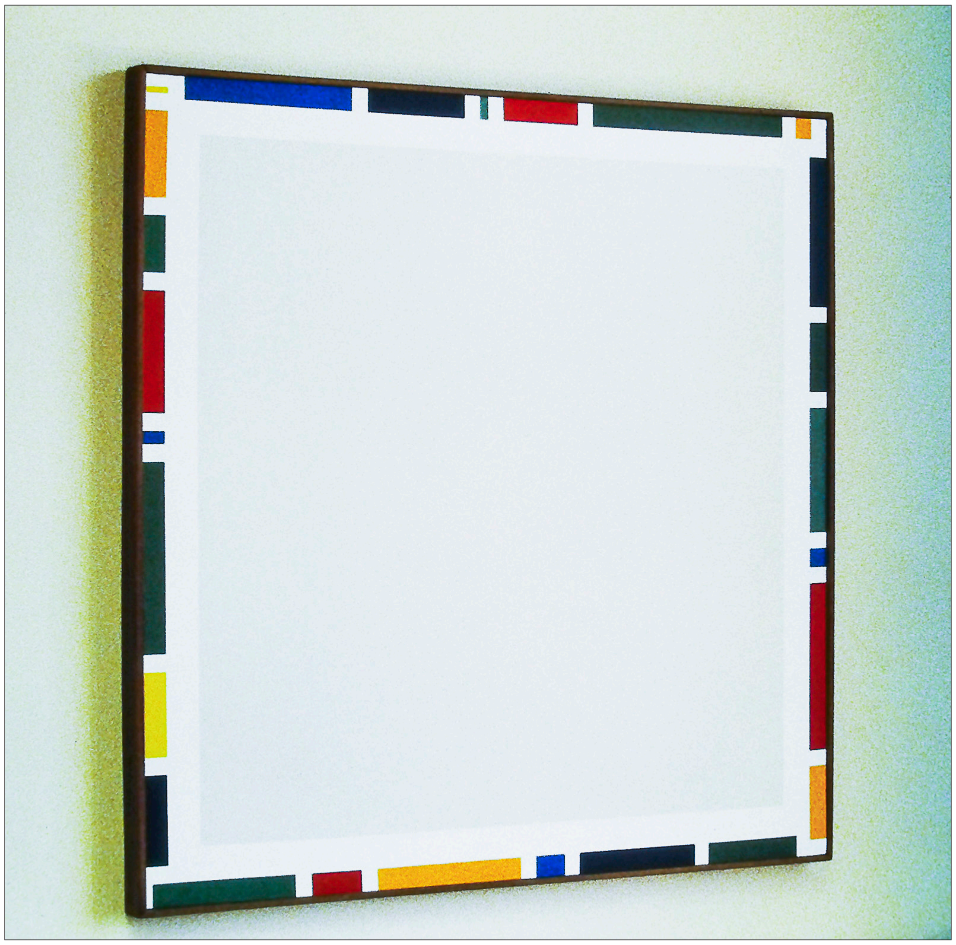
Untitled, 1972. Acrylic on canvas.



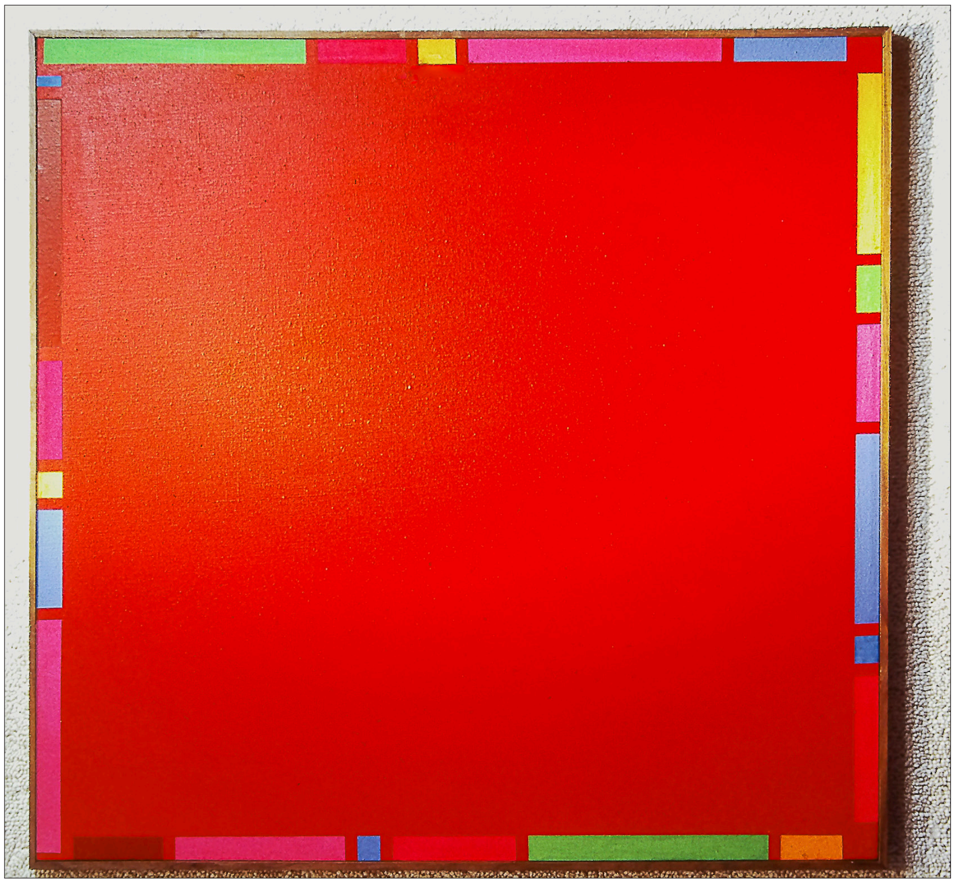
Double Edge, 1972. Acrylic on canvas, 58 x 48 in.



Untitled, 1972. Acrylic on canvas.

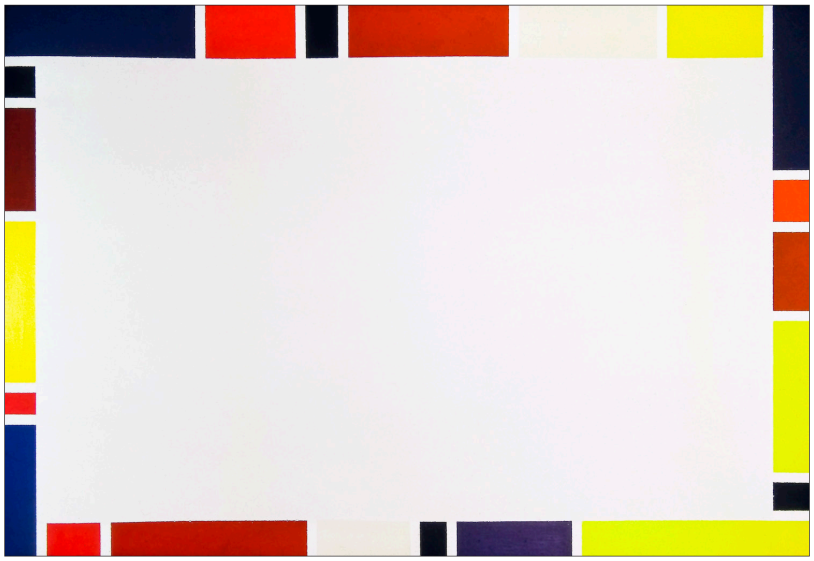


Untitled, 1973. Acrylic on canvas, 35 x 36 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



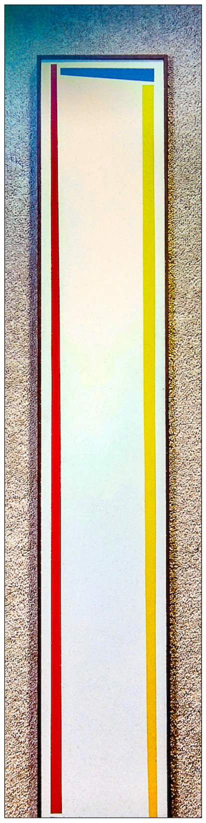
Untitled, 1972. Acrylic on canvas.

Edge Paintings: 1972 to 1974

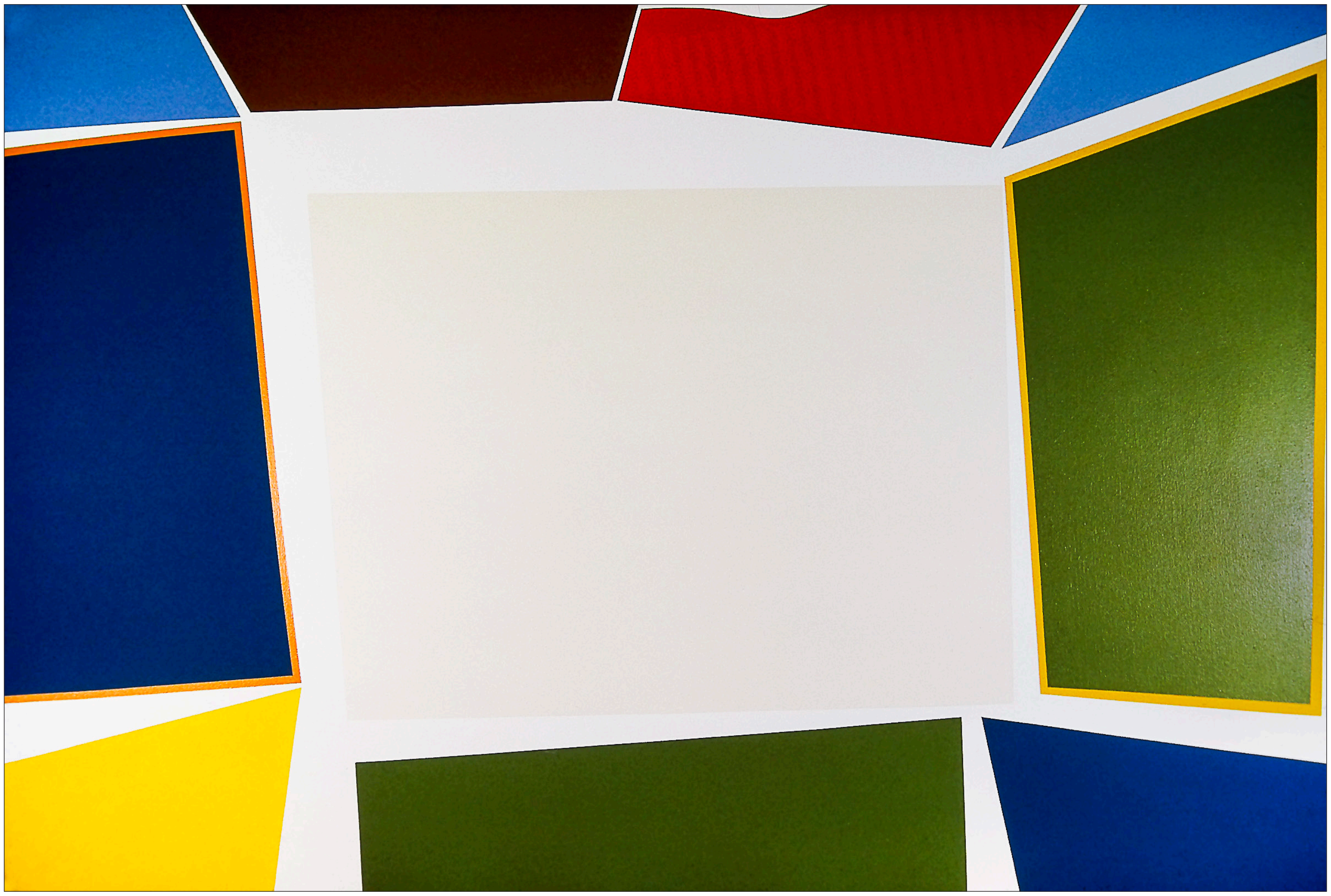


Heavy Edge, 1973. Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 70 in.

1973 or 1974. Acrylic on canvas.



Untitled, 1972.



Untitled, 1974. Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 98 in.

Casting Around: 1973 to 1975

I have a hard time getting my thoughts around my father's art production from 1973 to 1975, and I believe he might have, too.

By 1973, the Boxes were played out and he was moving on. But where was he going, and what did he take with him?

The most obvious element was the hard edge with which he produced all his forms, including curved ones. These he made using masking tape, house paints, rollers, and brushes. He also maintained broad spaces; an absence of gradation and brushwork; juxtapositions of bright colors; and those nondescript pine frames.

What he didn't bring with him was any sort of central motif. His works vary almost to the point of uncertainty. It's as if he had a great new tool—that sharp acrylic edge—but he wasn't sure what he wanted to do with it, yet. I think he was exploring, trying to get his bearings in new territory.

Flip through the pages to come and maybe you'll see what I see. The year 1973 brought primarily one sort of painting; 1974 a few other types; and 1975 still others. There was nothing of the obsessive playing out of one idea that marked the Box years. Not until 1976—when one motif hit like a ton of bricks—would he find anything that engaged prolonged interest.

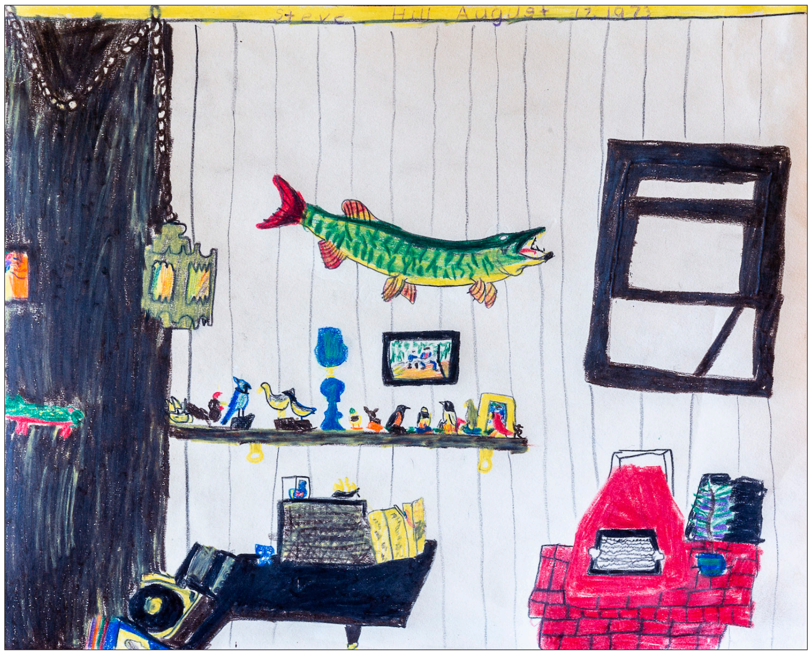
In addition to this restlessness, my father's public presence as an artist waned. Although his output was as great as ever, his records indicate fewer of his paintings appeared at regional exhibits than before. I find no sales to museums, no awards, although private sales to Kutak and other buyers continued.

As mentioned earlier, a changing art world was likely one reason for this. The fact that he was chairman of the art department—a position that wore at him, as he had no interest in or skill at politicking—probably ate the time and energy needed to get his work out there. And perhaps private sales satisfied his interest in getting his art out there in the world, even if it wasn't the public world. He did have a substantial one-person exhibit of note: the Stuhr Museum in Grand Island, Nebraska (1975).

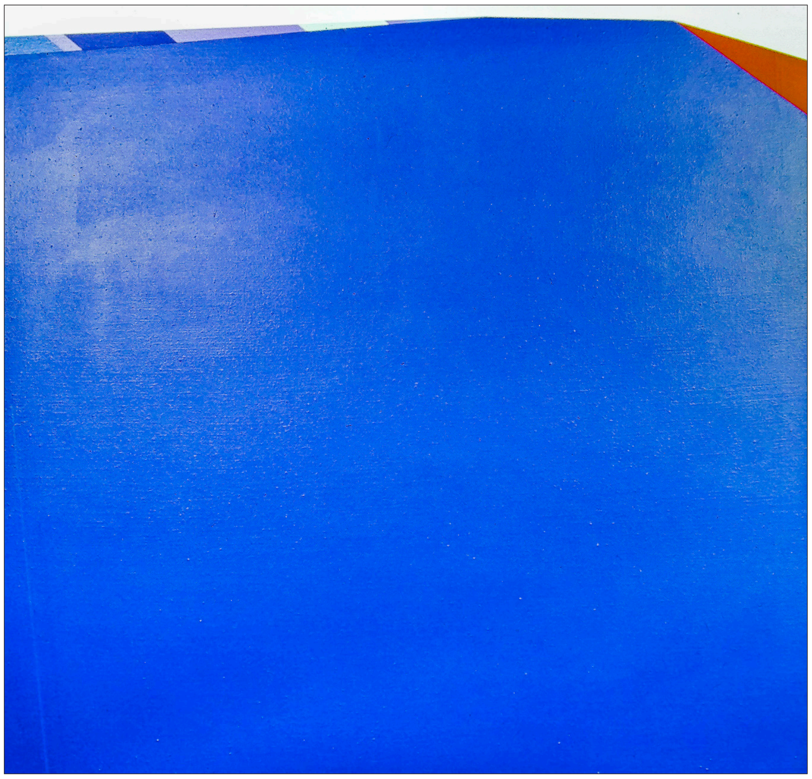
The previous section—taken up by Boxes and Minimalism and such—had no room to mention that in 1972 Peter and Jody welcomed their fifth child: Jonathan Robinson ("Robbie") Hill. Decades earlier my mother had announced a firm goal of six children to my undoubtedly startled (but apparently game) father. Five down, one to go.

Robbie, Peter, and Jody Hill, April 1972

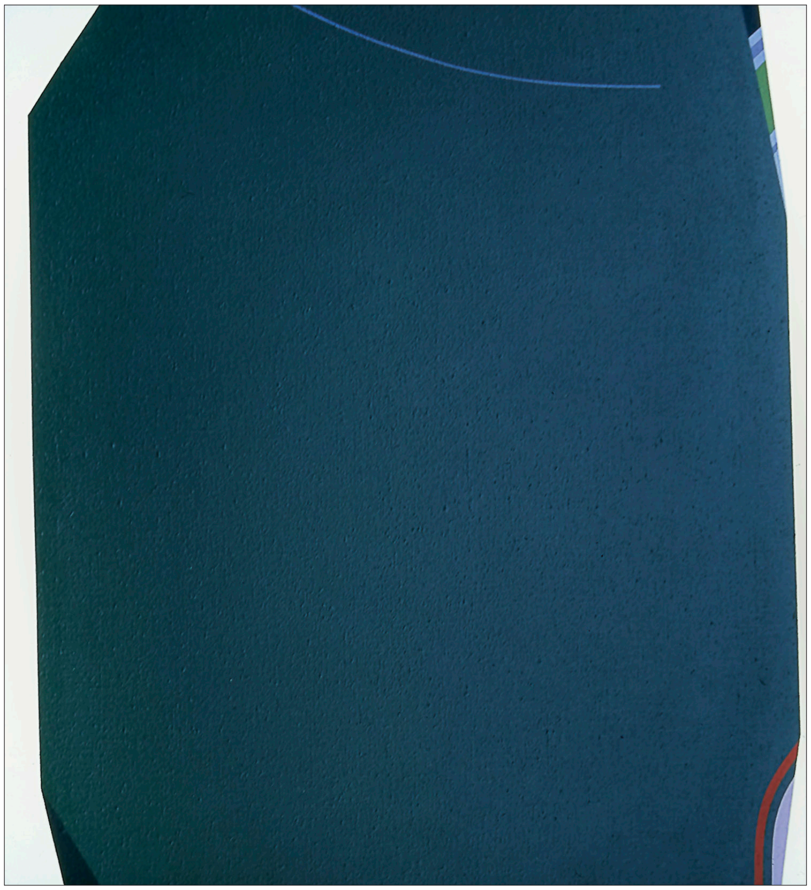
As for his leisure, it remained the summers in Canada. In 1973 a budding artist produced of that place a lovely work familiar to many of us.



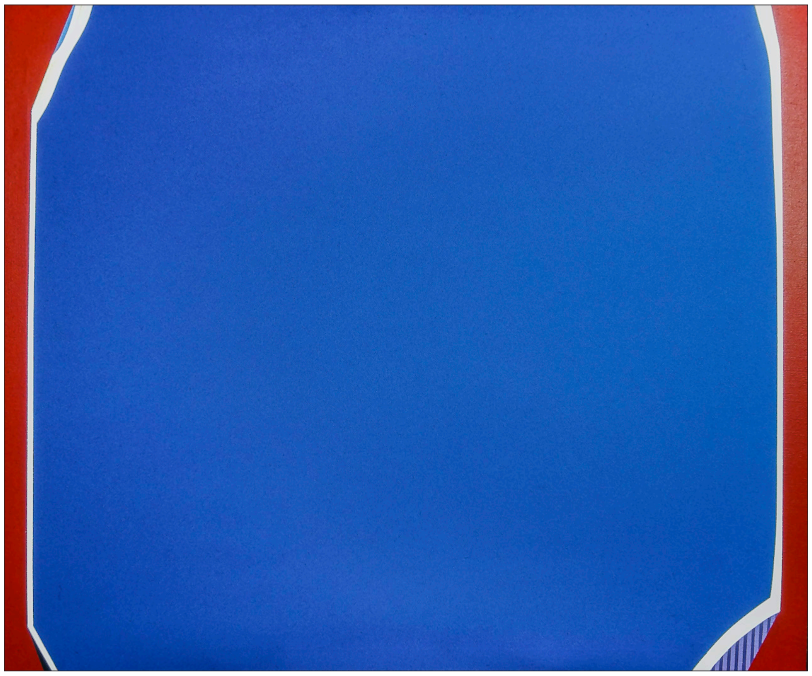
Stephen Hill. East wall of the Canada cabin, 1973.
Colored pencil and marker on paper, 9 x 11.25 in.



Untitled, 1973. Acrylic on canvas.



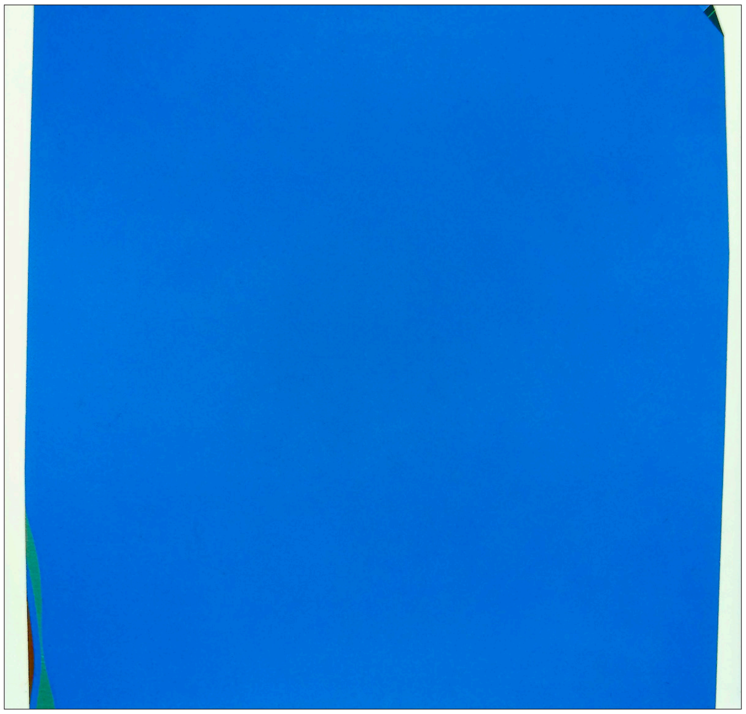
Untitled, 1973. Acrylic on canvas.



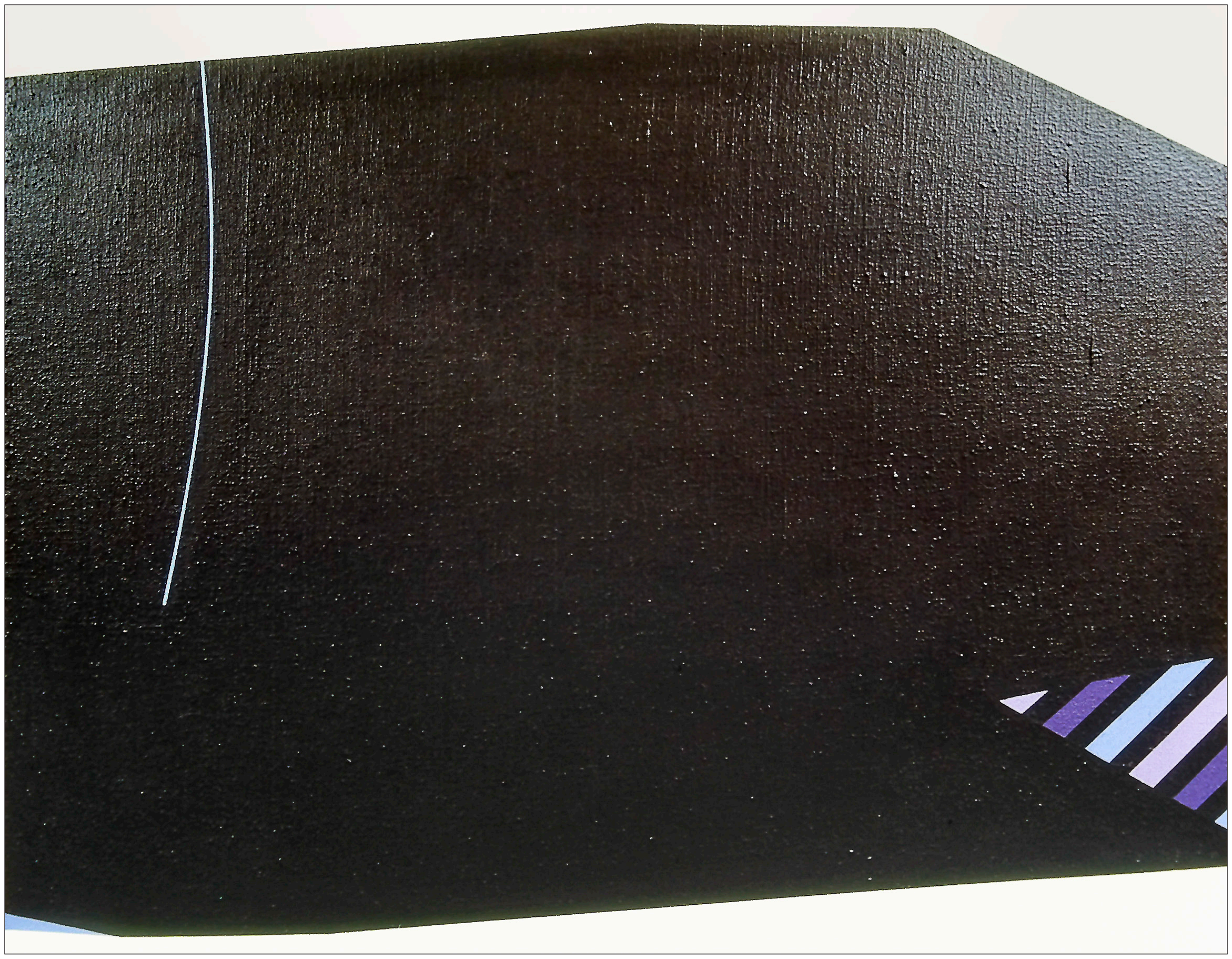
Untitled, 1973. Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 48 in.

Untitled, 1973. Acrylic on canvas.

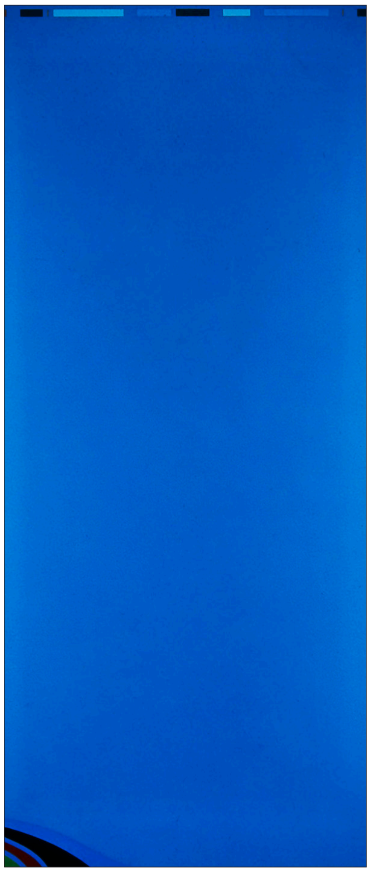
Untitled, 1973. Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 52 in.
Collection of Robert F. Hower



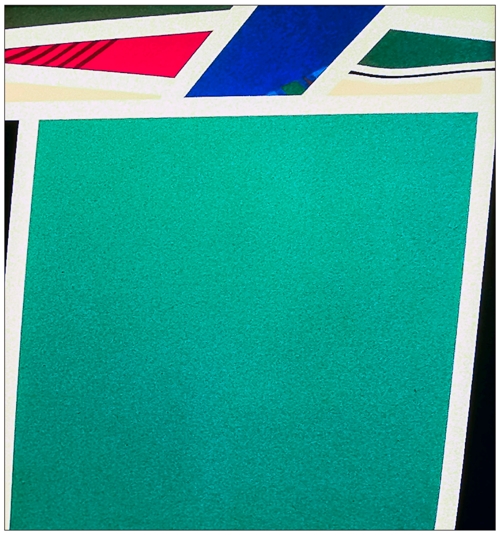
Untitled, 1973. Acrylic on canvas.



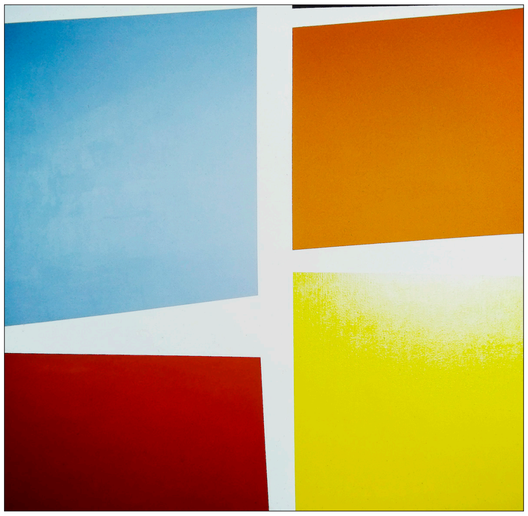
Untitled, 1973. Acrylic on canvas.



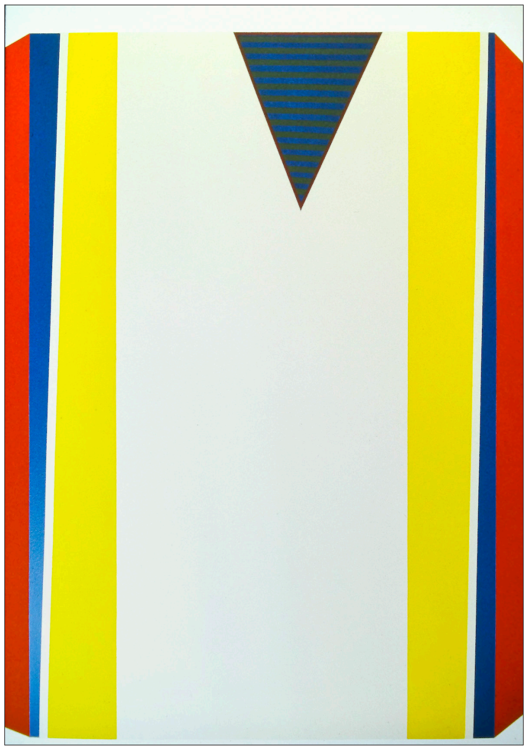
Blue, 1973.
Acrylic on canvas.



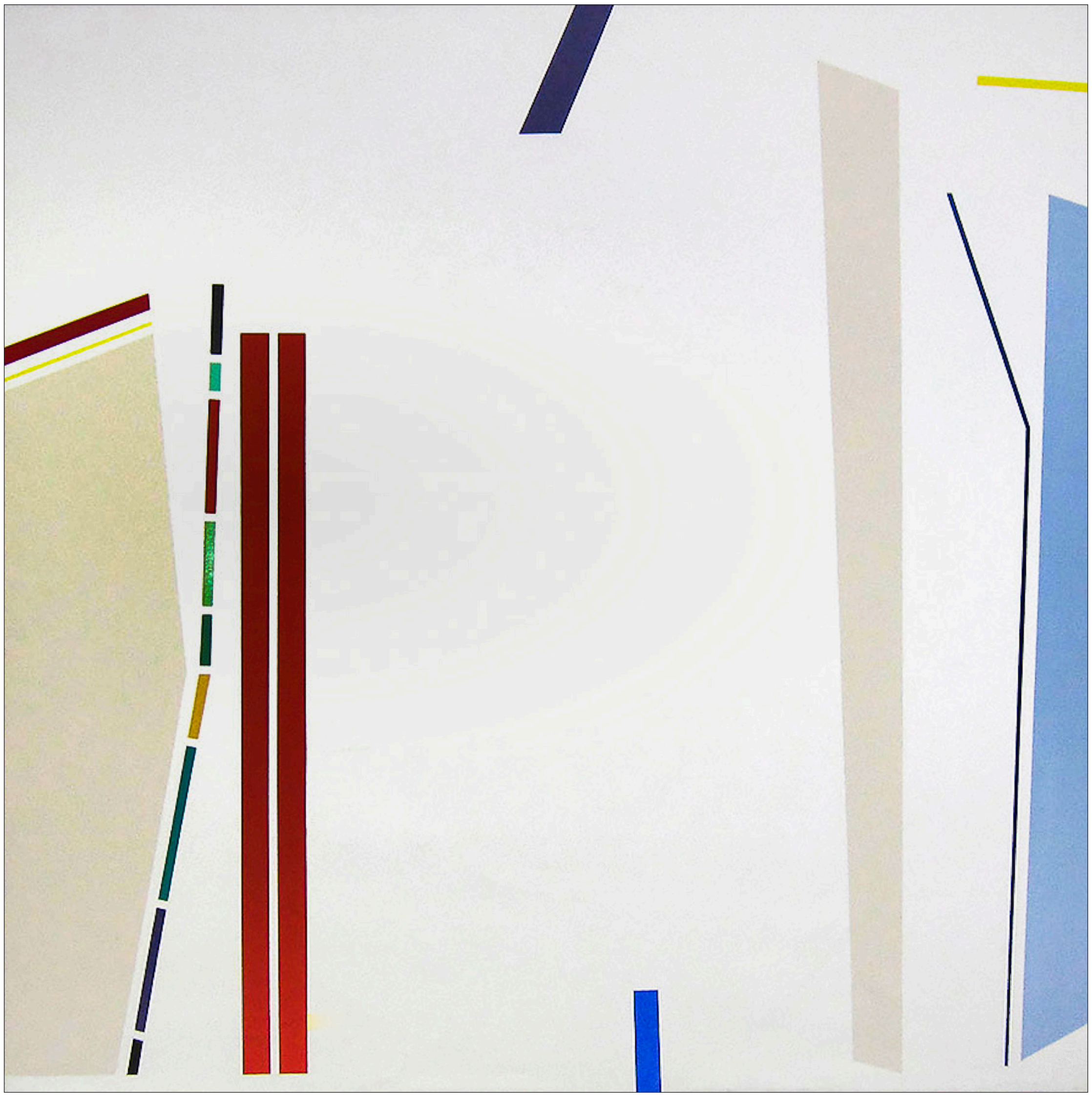
Untitled, 1973. Acrylic, 23 x 21 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



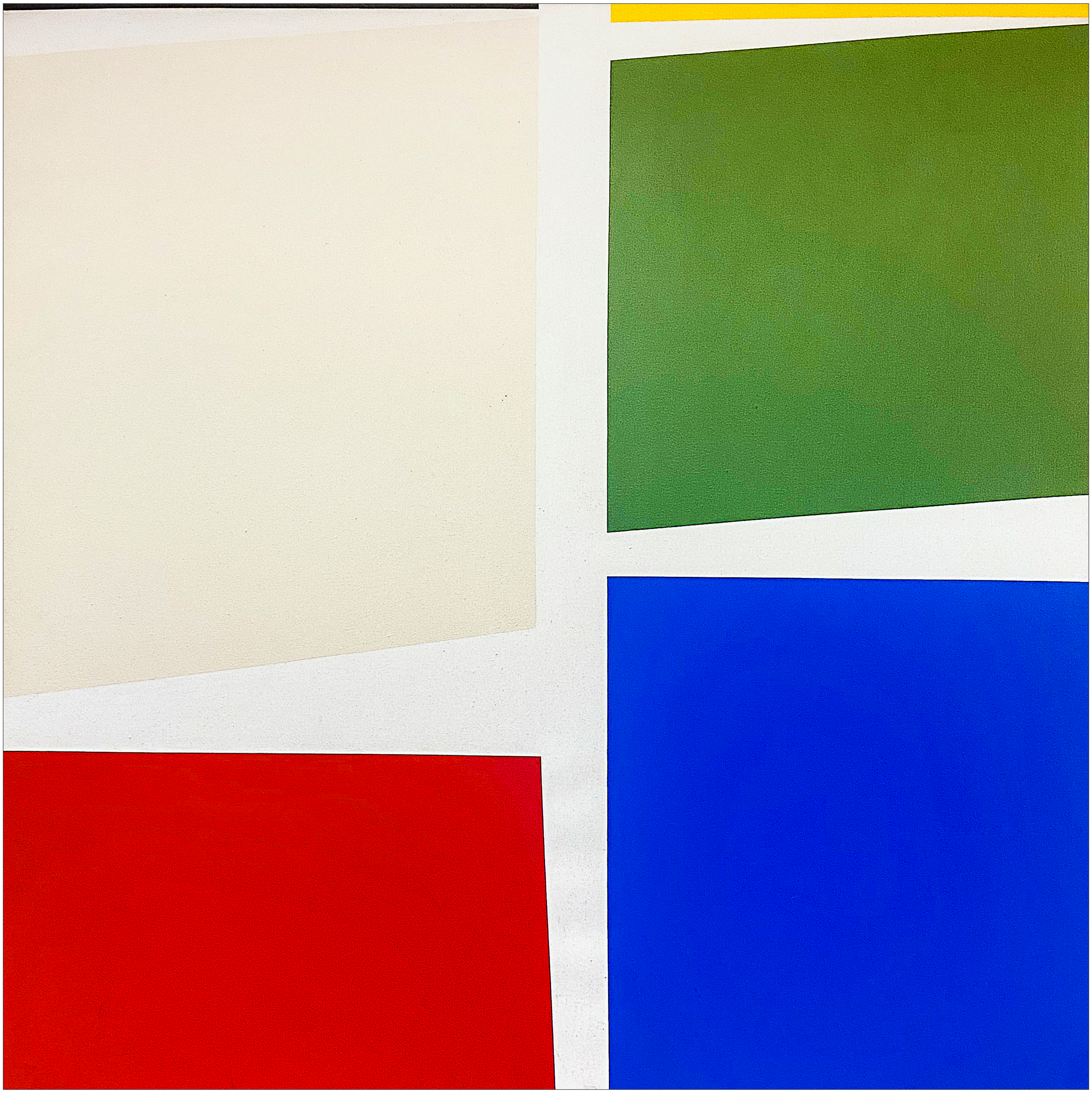
Untitled (early version), 1972–3. Acrylic,
59 x 59 in. Collection of Kutak Rock.



Untitled, 1974. Acrylic on canvas,
72 x 48 in. Collection of Kutak Rock.



Door Study, 1973.
Acrylic on canvas, 69 x 69 in. Collection of the Museum of Nebraska Art.



Untitled (final version)

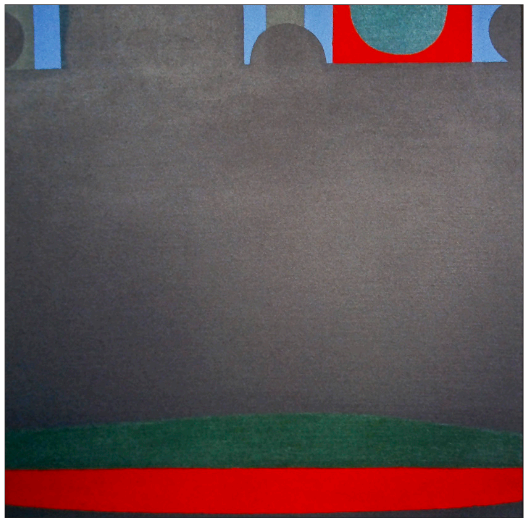
1972–3. Acrylic on canvas, 59 x 59 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

Untitled

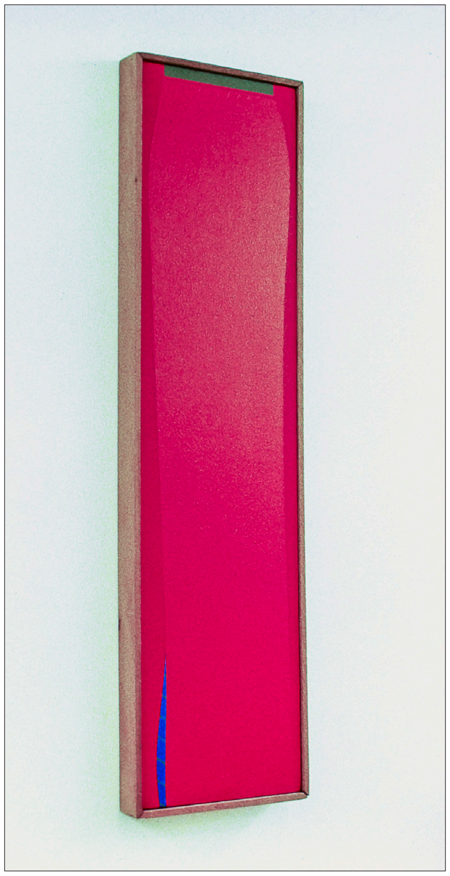
1973. Acrylic on canvas, 21 x 23 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

Untitled

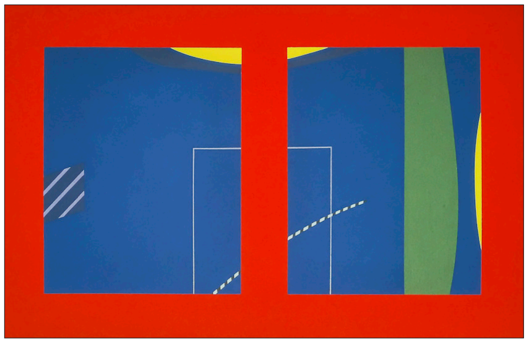
1973. Acrylic on canvas, 22.5 x 17 in.
Collection of Haven and Simmy Pell.



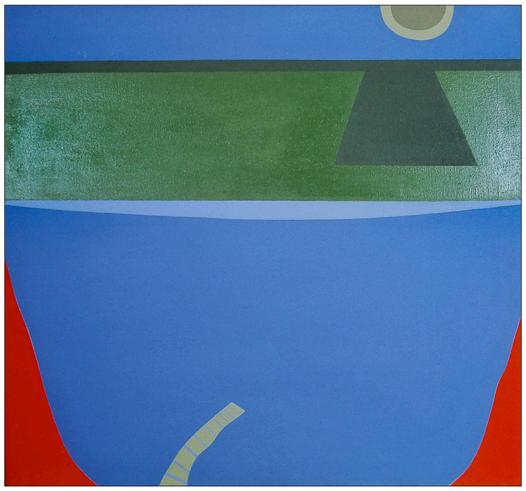
Untitled, 1973–4. Acrylic on canvas.



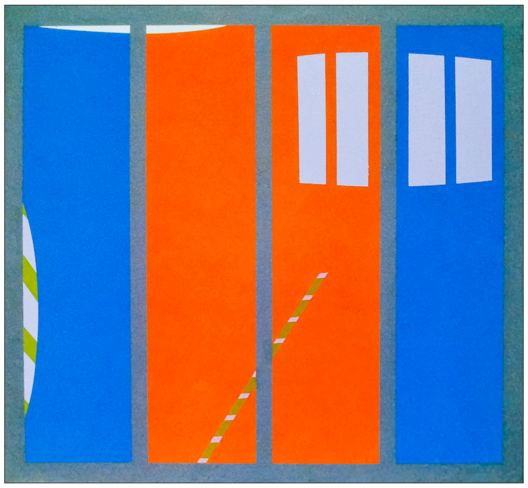
Untitled, 1975. Acrylic on canvas, 33 x 9 in. Collection of Kutak Rock.



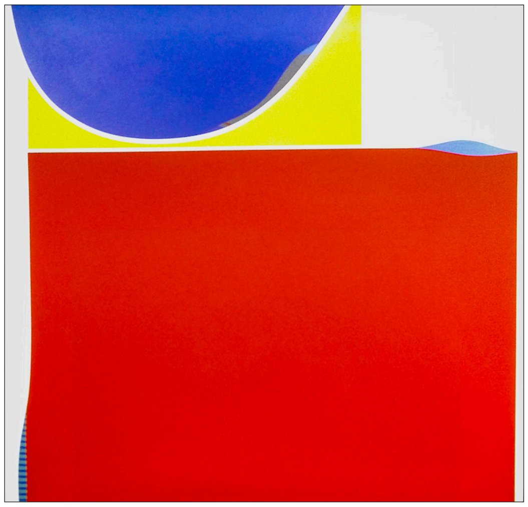
Windows, 1975. Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 24 in.



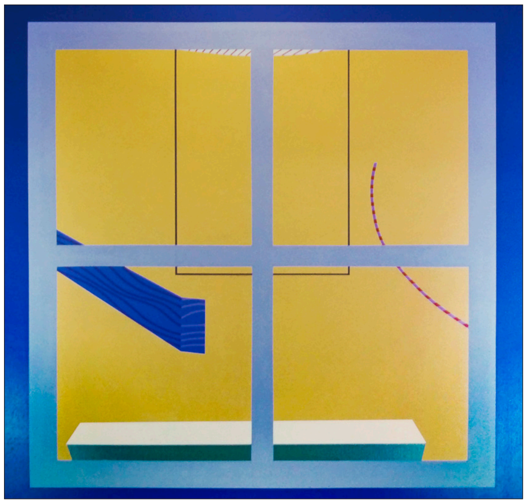
Untitled, 1974. Acrylic on canvas.



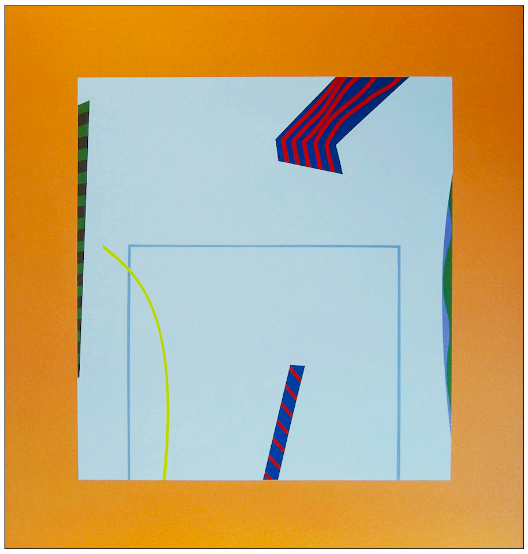
Untitled, 1975. Acrylic on canvas, 23 x 25 in. Collection of Kutak Rock.



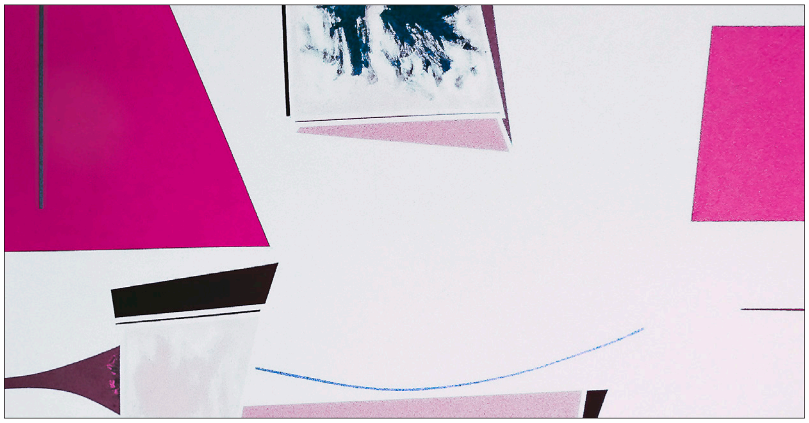
Untitled, 1974. Acrylic on canvas.



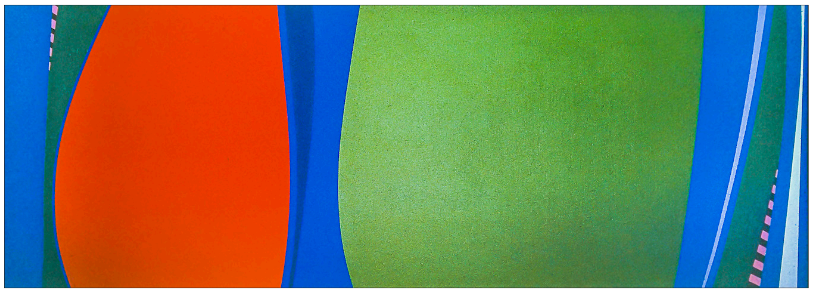
Untitled, 1975. Acrylic on canvas, 69 x 69 in.



Window, 1975. Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 34 in. Collection of Kutak Rock.

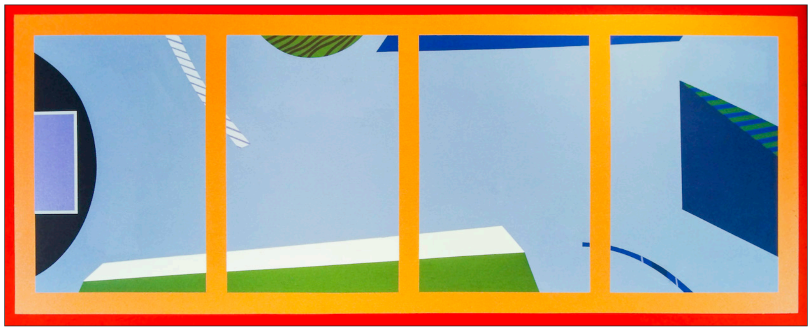


Sparta, 1973. Acrylic on canvas, 43 x 96 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

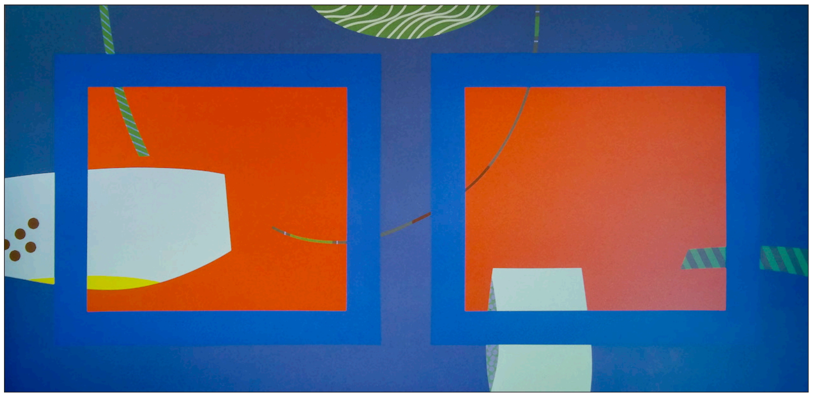


Untitled, 1973–4. Acrylic on canvas, 30 x 83 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

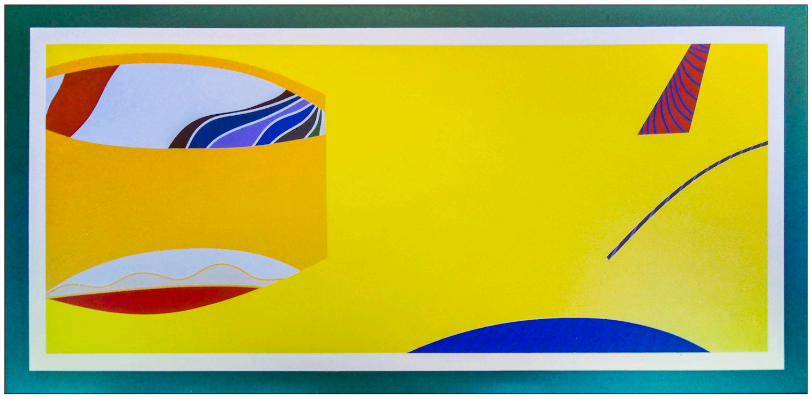
Untitled, 1974. Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 72 in.



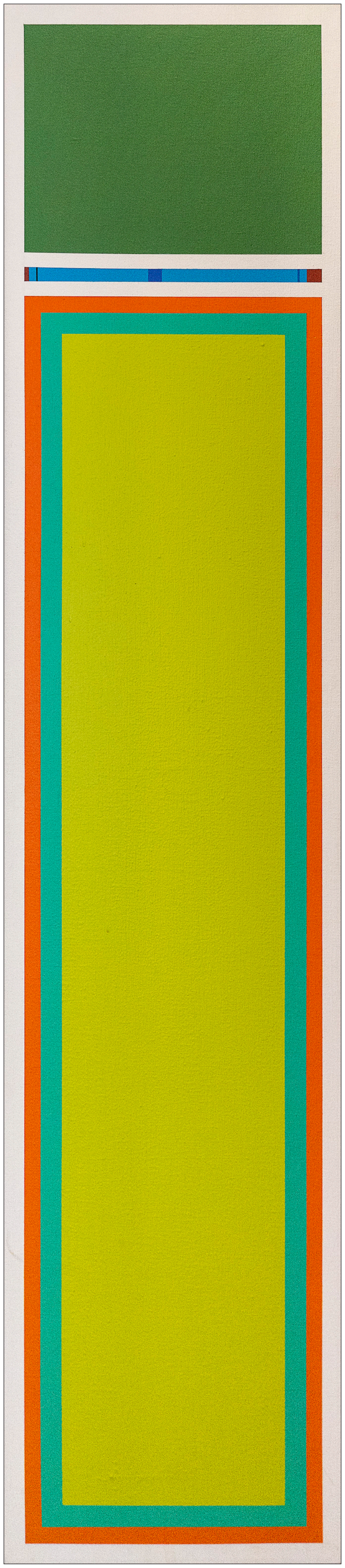
Windows, 1975. Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 83 in.



Samarkand, 1975. Acrylic on canvas, 47 x 96 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

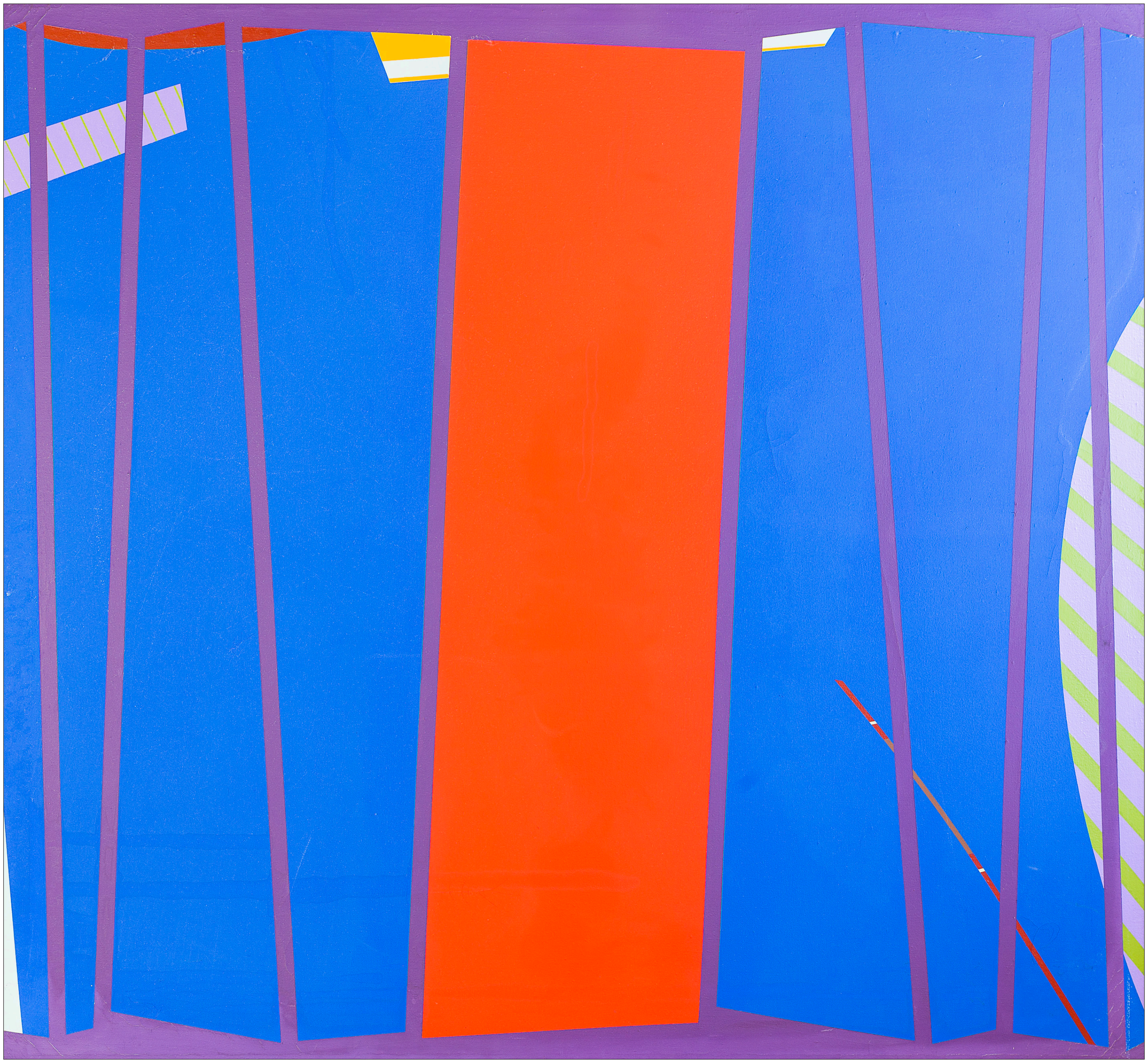


Libertine, 1975. Acrylic on canvas, 47 x 96 in.



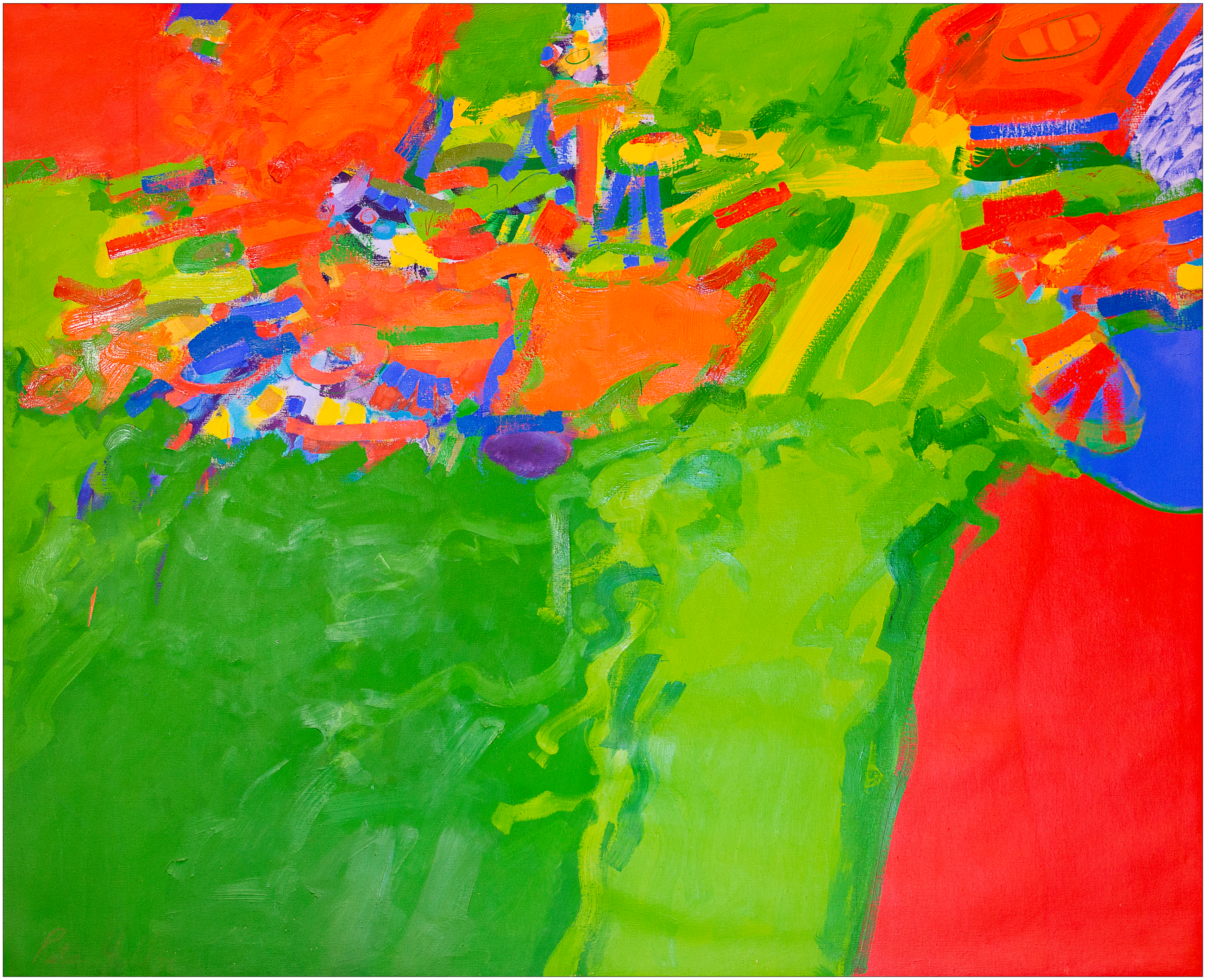
Untitled

1973. Acrylic on canvas, 57 x 12 in.
Collection of Katy and Jon Welles.



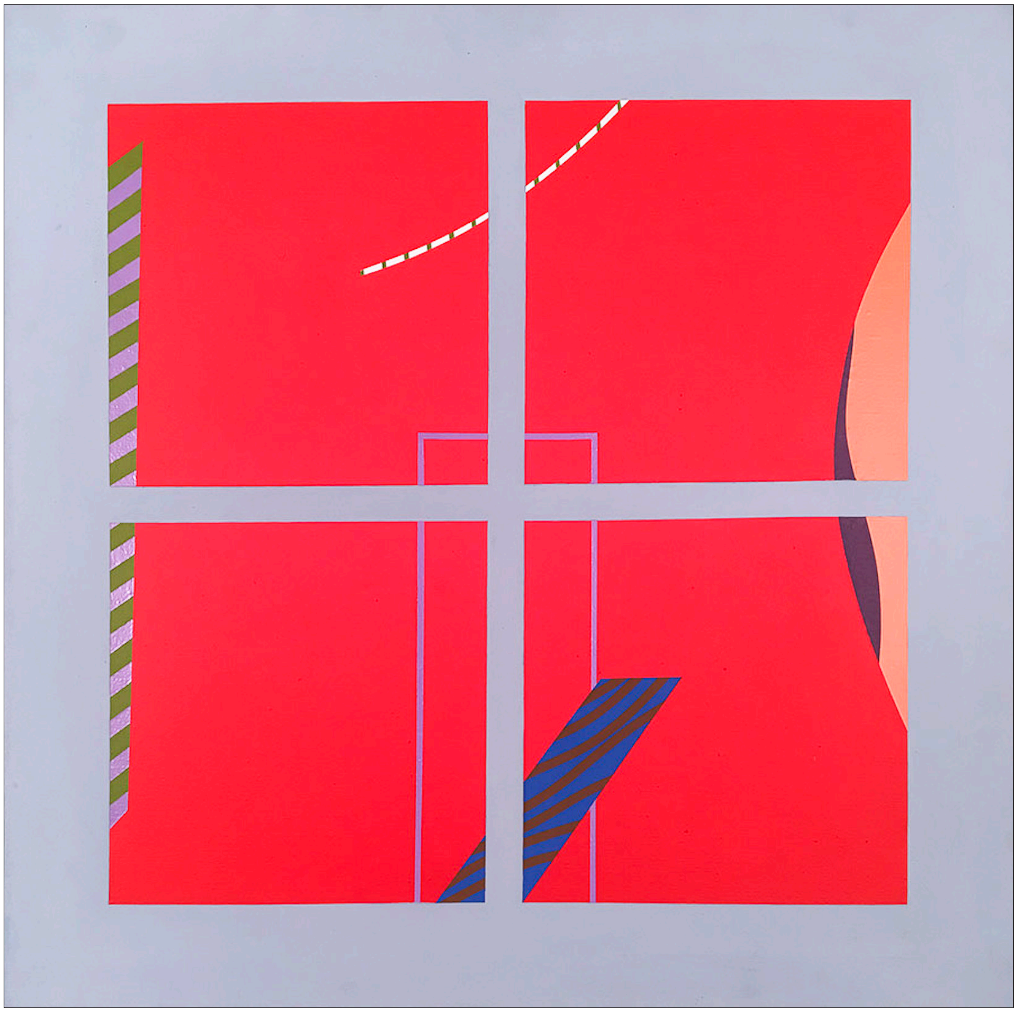
Untitled

1975. Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 64 in.
Collection of Eddie Wintroub.



Untitled

1975. Acrylic on canvas, 65 x 80 in.
Collection of Eddie Wintroub.

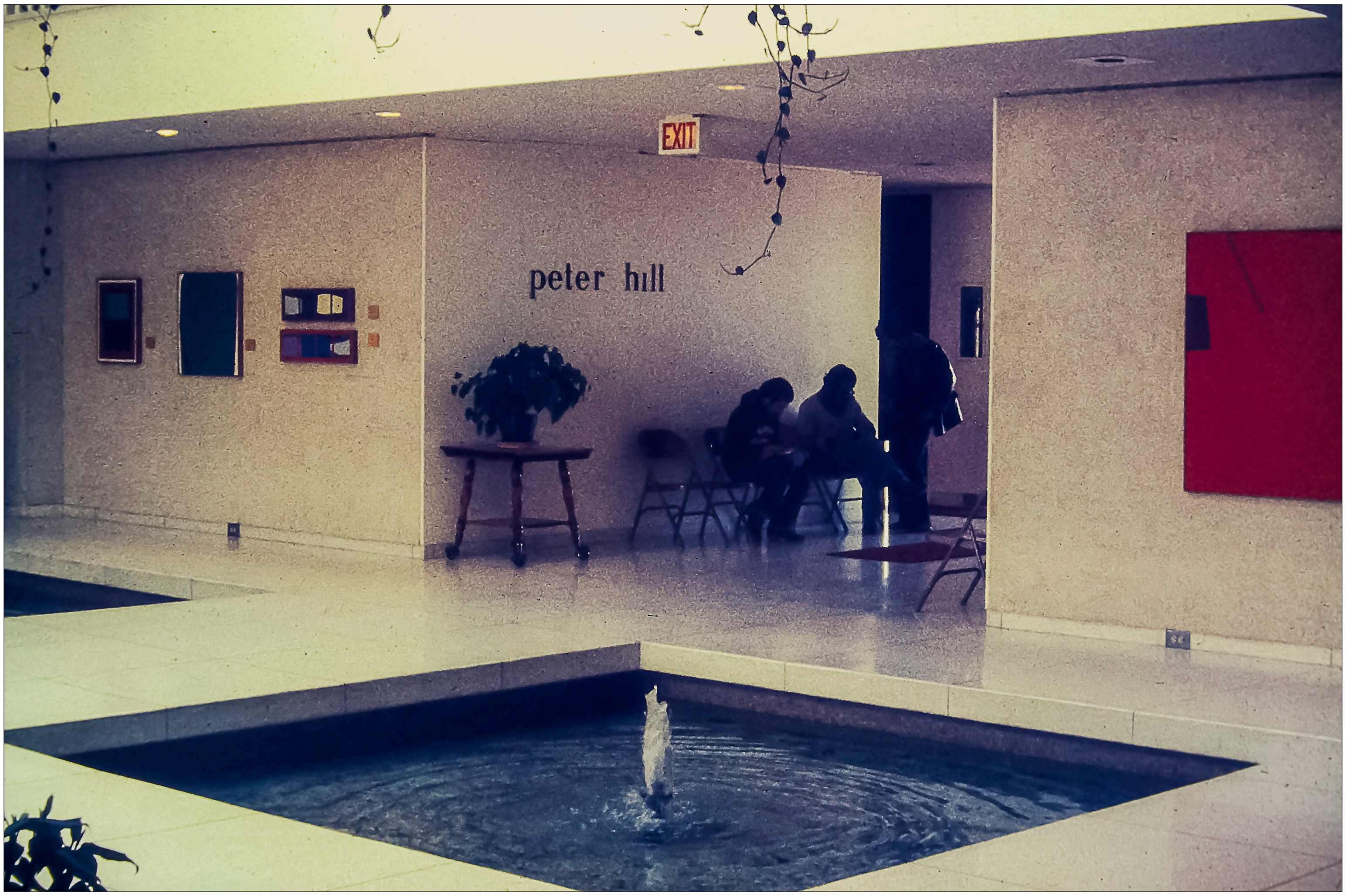


Windows IV

1975. Acrylic on canvas, 27.75 x 27.75 in.
Collection of the Museum of Nebraska Art.

Stuhr Museum, Grand Island, Nebraska

One-Man Show • March and April 1975



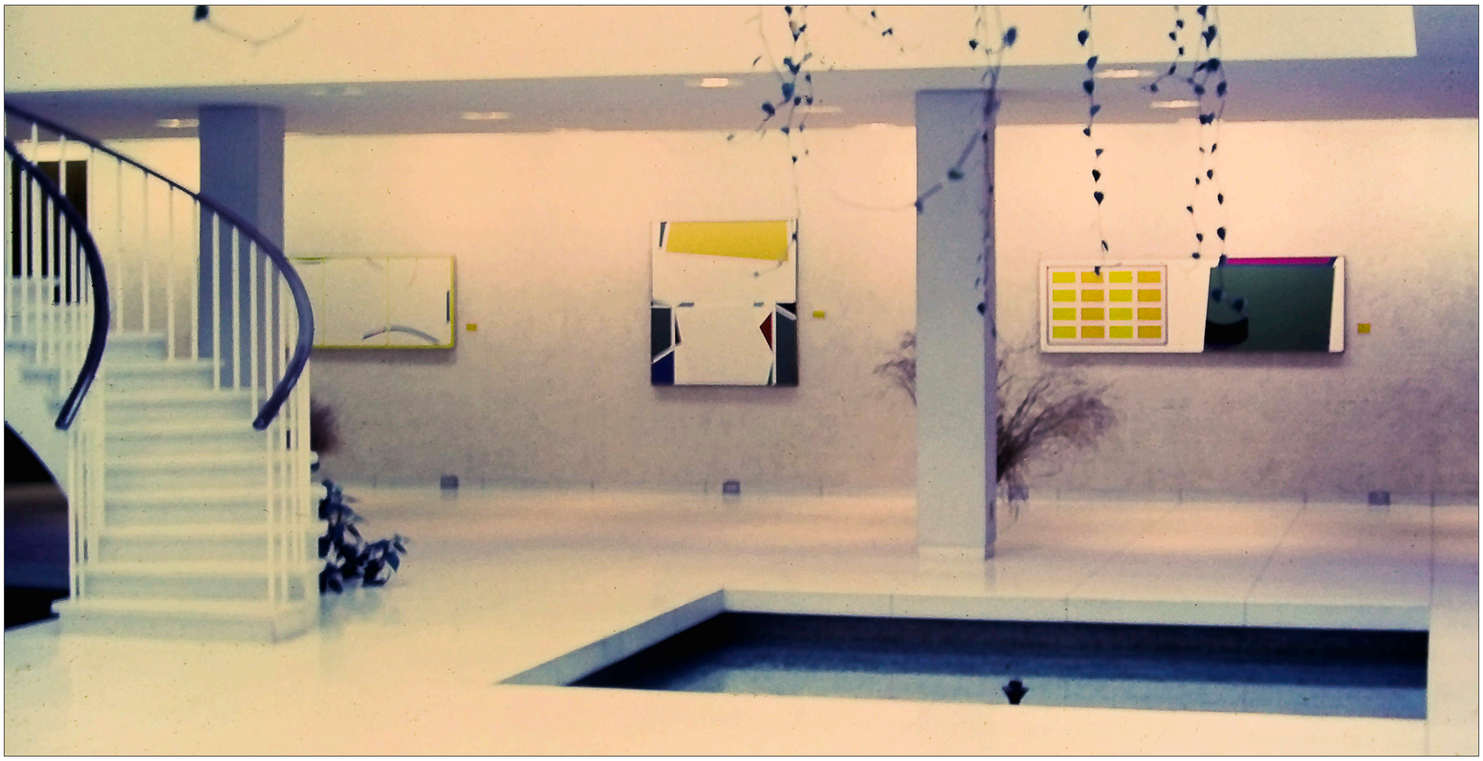
Omaha World-Herald, March 14, 1975

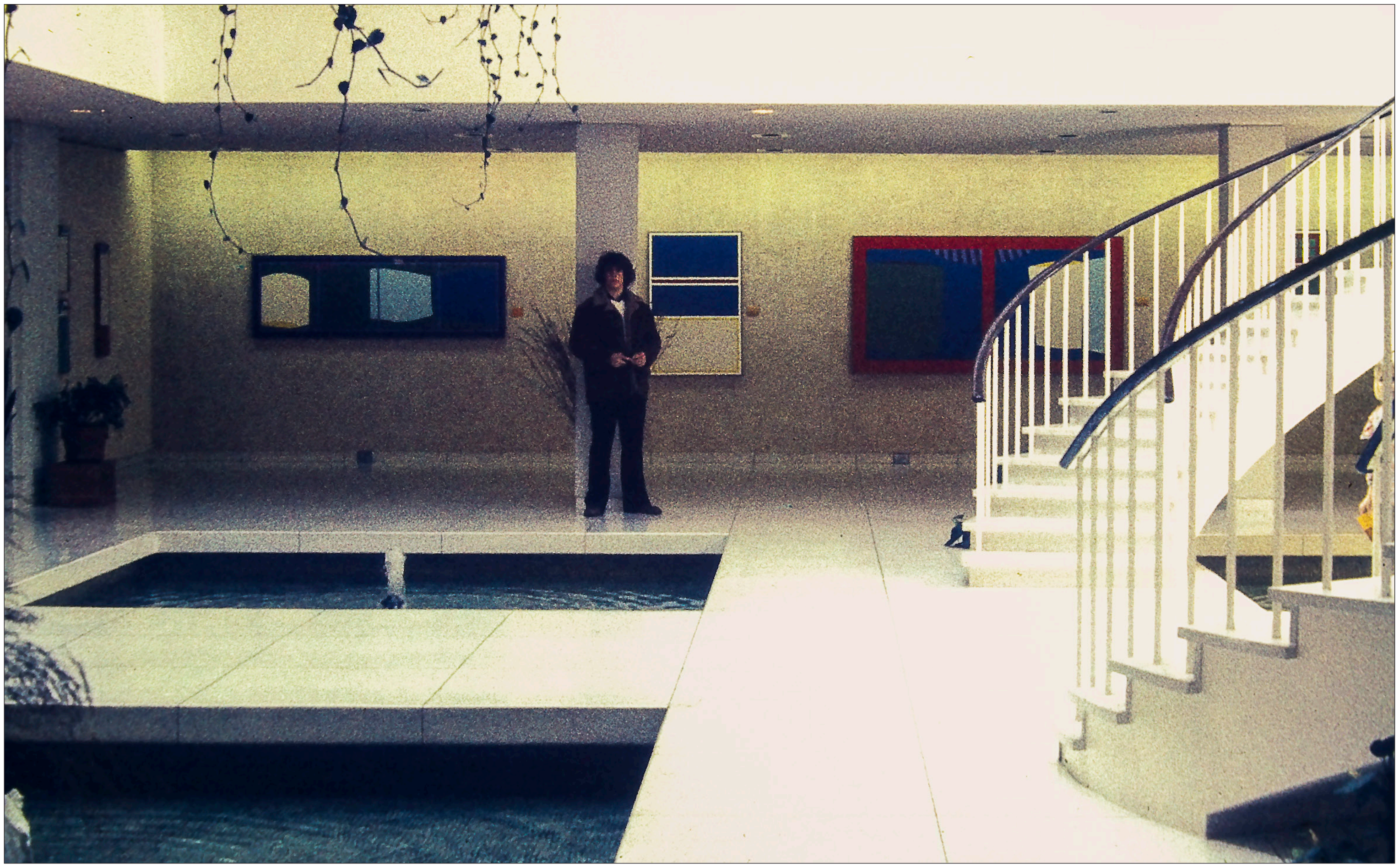
UNO Prof Peter Hill Showing Art at Stuhr

Peter Hill, chairman of the art department at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, will exhibit paintings and give slide lectures and critiques at the Stuhr Museum in Grand Island today, Saturday, and Sunday.

Hill will address elementary, junior, and senior high school and college art students and teachers. The talks are open to the public. Hill's exhibit consists of 20 acrylic paintings completed in the last six months.

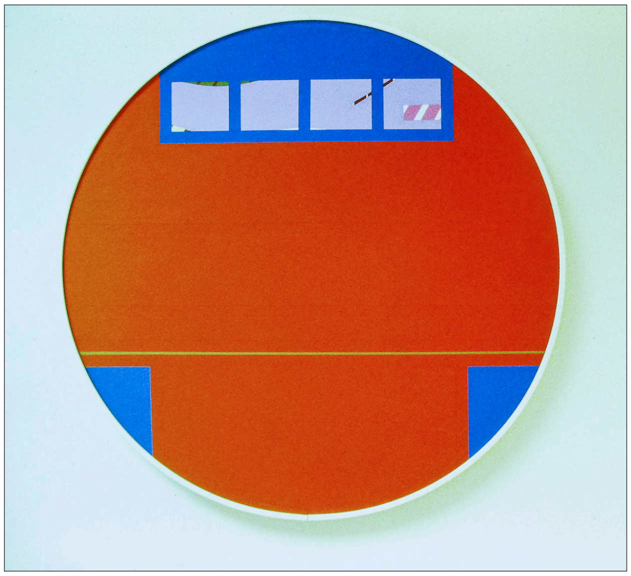
The project is sponsored by Stuhr and the Nebraska Arts Council.



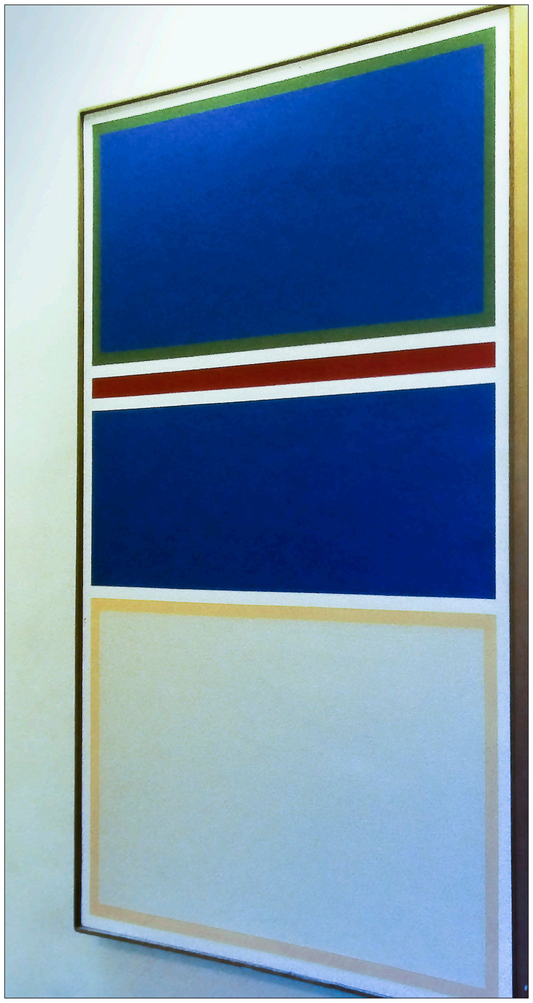


Person might be a student, or it could be James (Jim) Hill, who would have been 14 years old in March 1975.

Stuhr Museum • March and April 1975

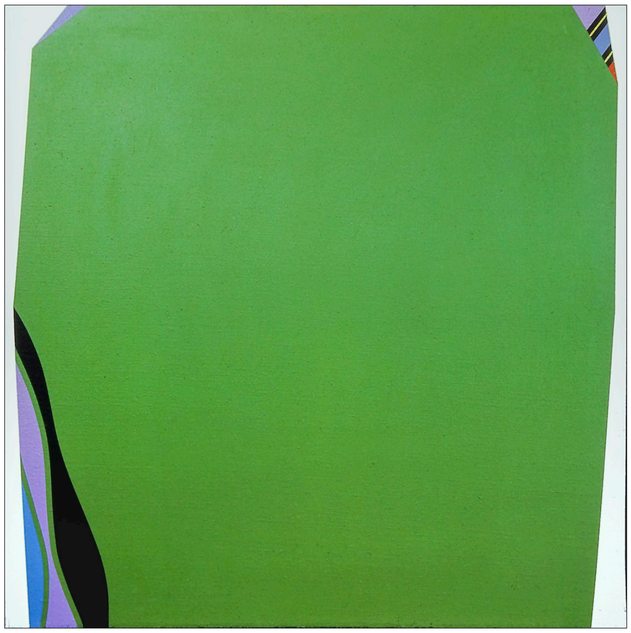


Windows I, 1975.
Acrylic on canvas, 30 in. diameter.

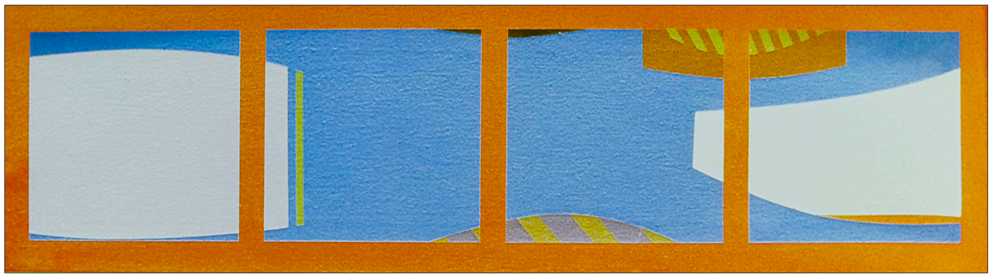


Untitled, 1973. Acrylic, 50 x 33 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

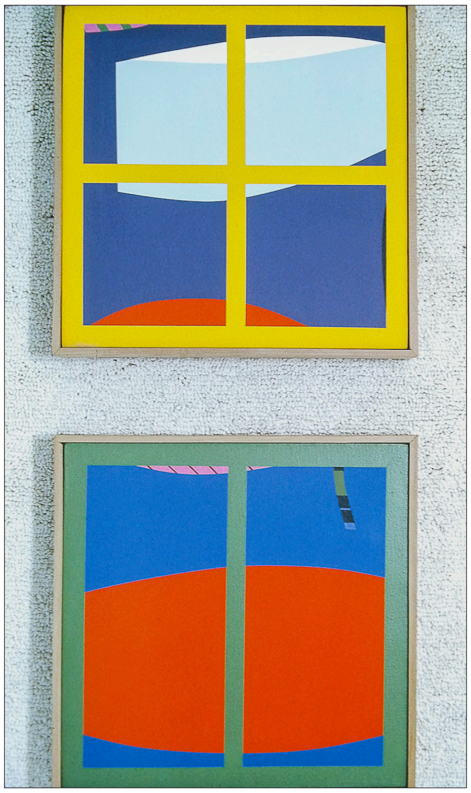
Untitled, 1973.
Acrylic on canvas, 13 x 56 in.



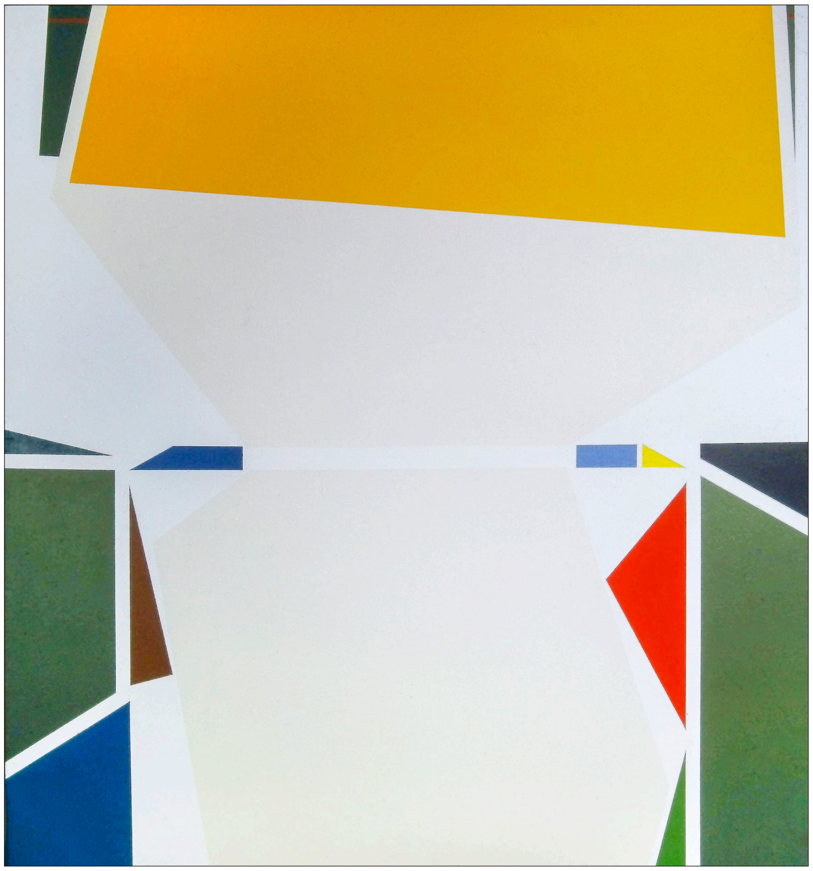
Untitled, 1973. Acrylic on canvas, 29 x 29 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



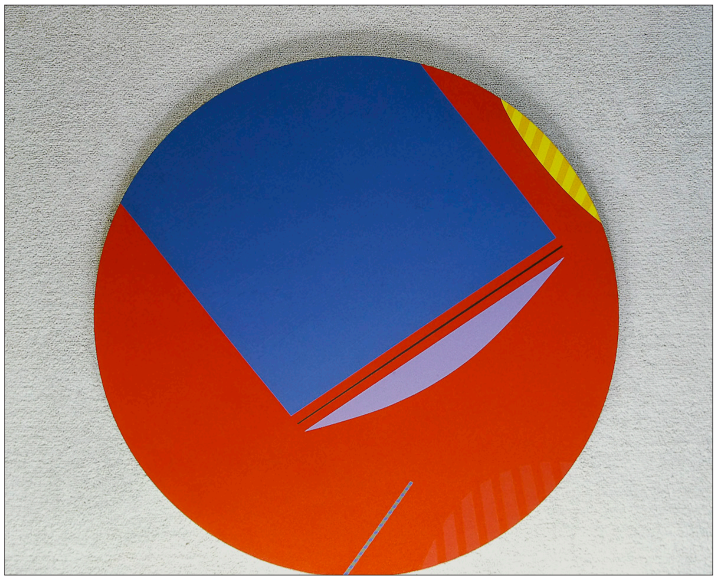
Untitled, 1974–5. Acrylic on canvas, 31 x 9 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



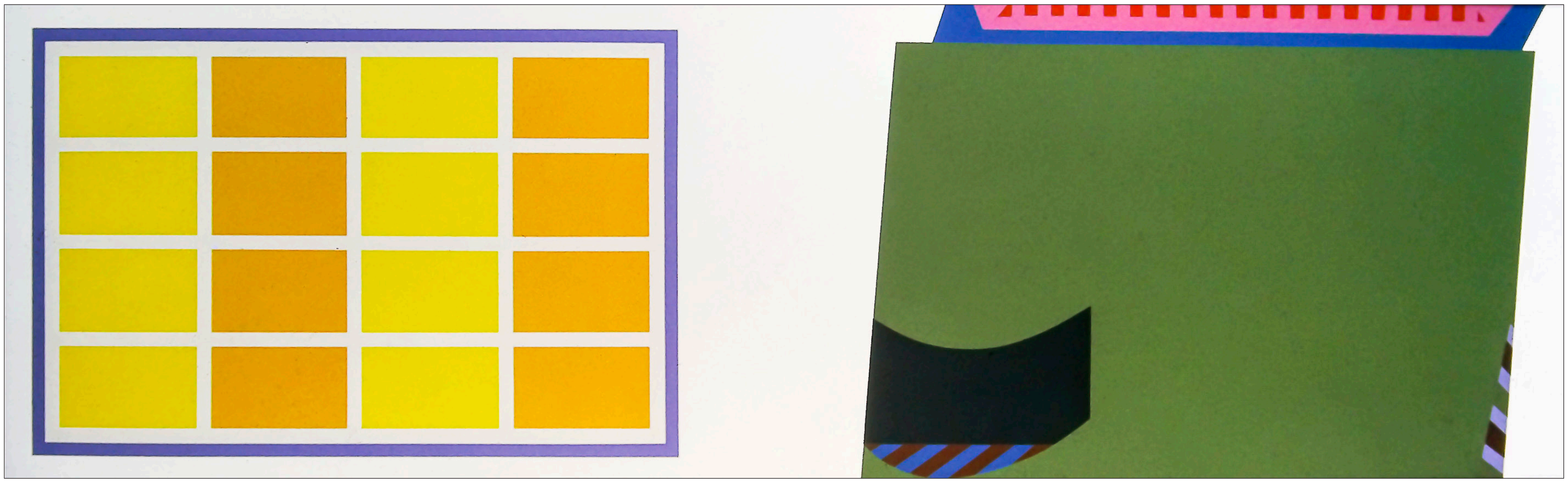
Windows, 1975. Acrylic on canvas, both 12 x 12 in.



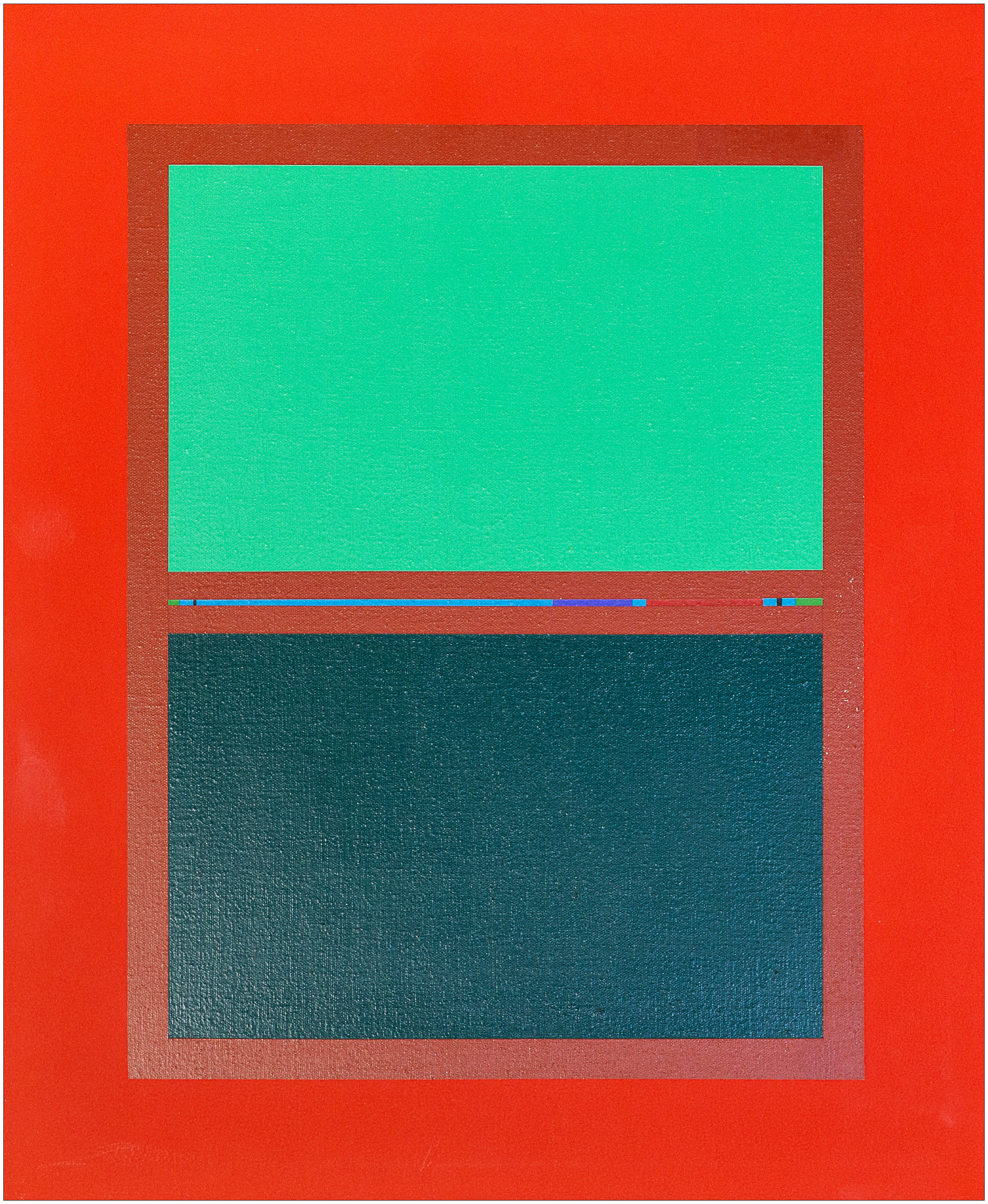
Untitled, 1974. Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48 in.



Tondo, 1975. Acrylic on canvas, 43 in. diameter.



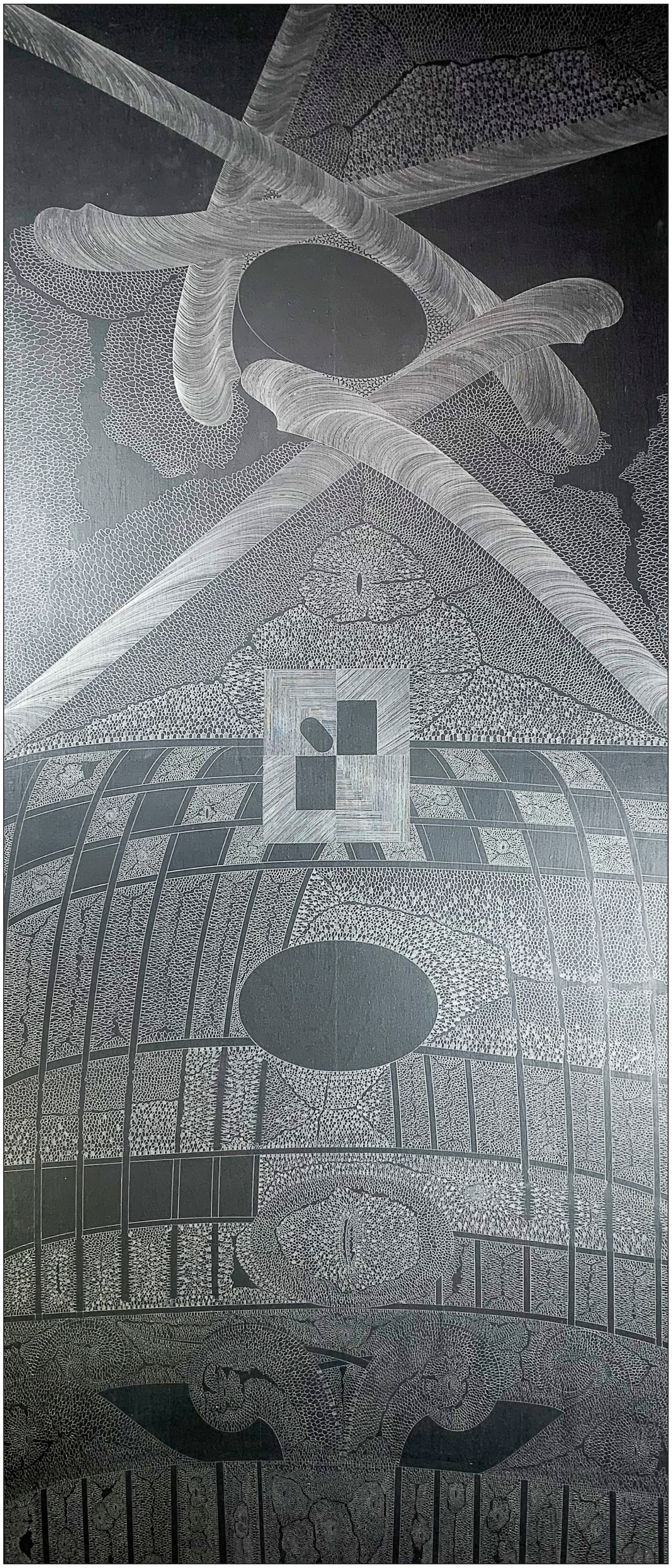
1974–5. Acrylic on canvas.



Untitled

1973 or 1974. Acrylic.
Collection of Eddie Wintroub.

Remembrance by Michael Tegland



Michael Tegland was the Chief Preparator at the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha for nearly 30 years. His work resides in numerous private and public collections.

He is the recipient of the Omaha Arts and Entertainment Award in 2012 and was again nominated in 2013. Tegland's work was acquired into the Sheldon Museum of Art's permanent collection in 2013.

Peter Hill was my painting/drawing instructor for four years in the mid-1970's.

I met Peter my first year at UNO and remember he always wore a tie, occasionally smoked a pipe, and drove a VW [Volkswagon] bus. Something that connected me to him right away, as I have owned several VW's over the years, including a VW bus today.

One of my favorite memories of Peter is when I came to the studio early one weekend morning to work when it was quiet. I was surprised to find a light on in the saw room and found Peter alone focused with his back to me, talking to himself while busy working on a frame. Since he hadn't noticed me, I quietly backed out and let him continue his conversation.

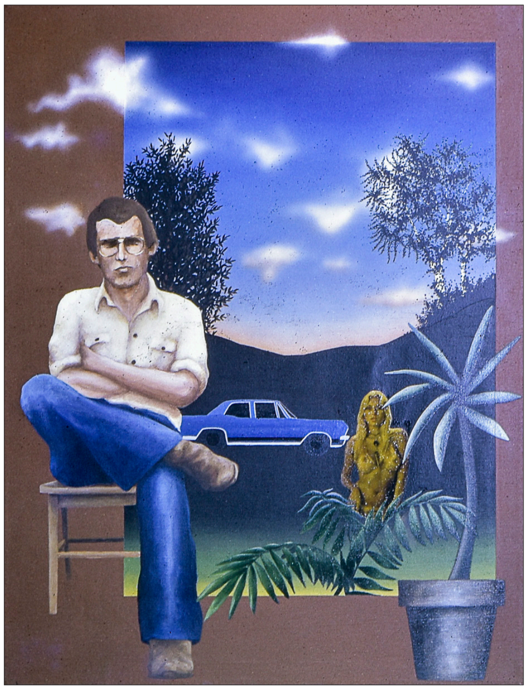
Peter was a great influence on my interest in geometric abstraction which continues in my work to this day some 50 years later.

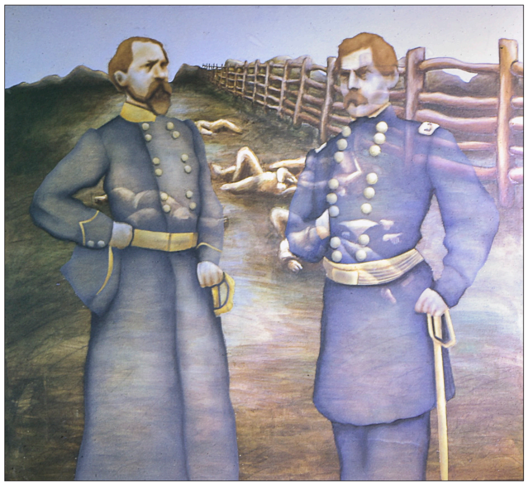
—Michael Tegland

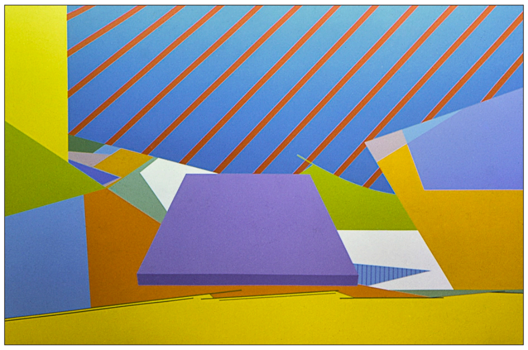
Michael Tegland. *Sincerely, L. Cohen*, 2014.
Graphite and latex on birch panel, 46 x 23 in.

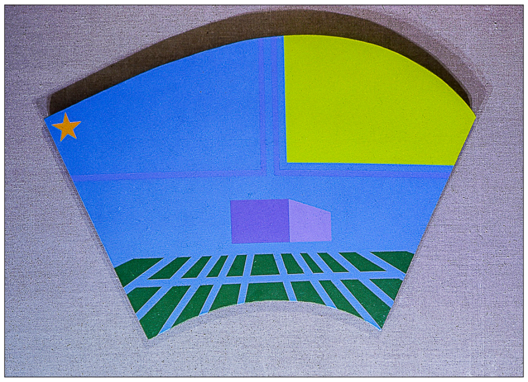
Student Work, 1975

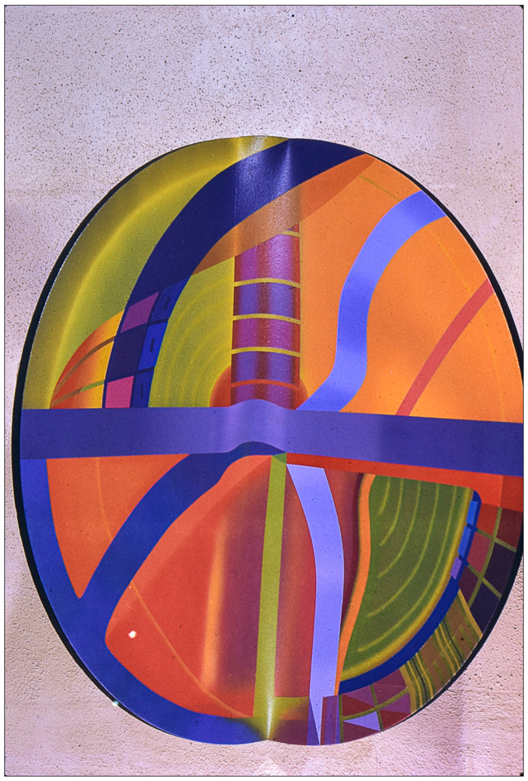
Starting in 1975, my father began making slides of his students' works, typically from their undergraduate thesis shows. Their works will occasionally appear throughout the rest of this book. Many students went on to careers as teachers, curators, and artists.

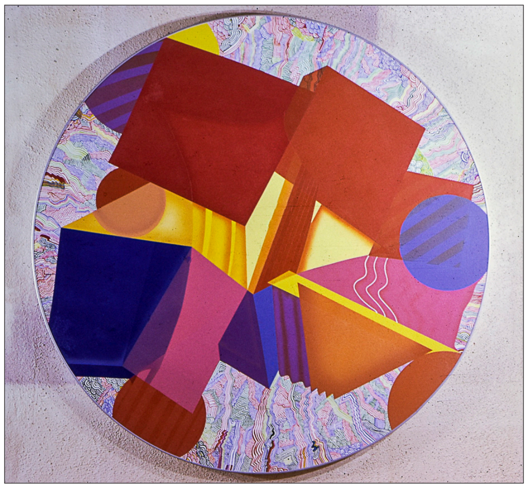

Robin Fergus, 1975, 60 x 48 in.

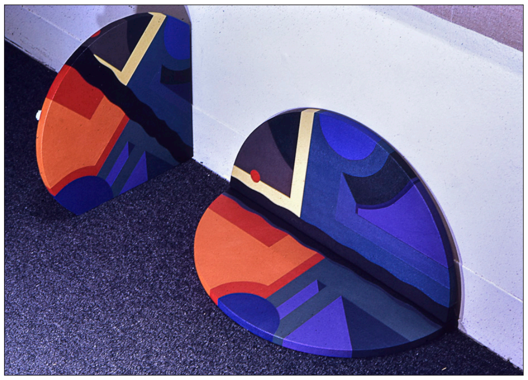

Robin Fergus, *American Trilogy*, 1975

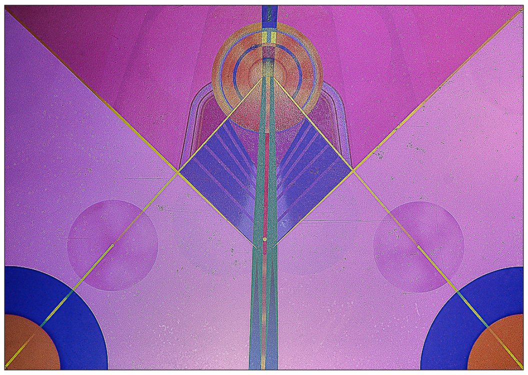

Mike Tegland, *Speck 40*, 1975, 72 x 48 in.

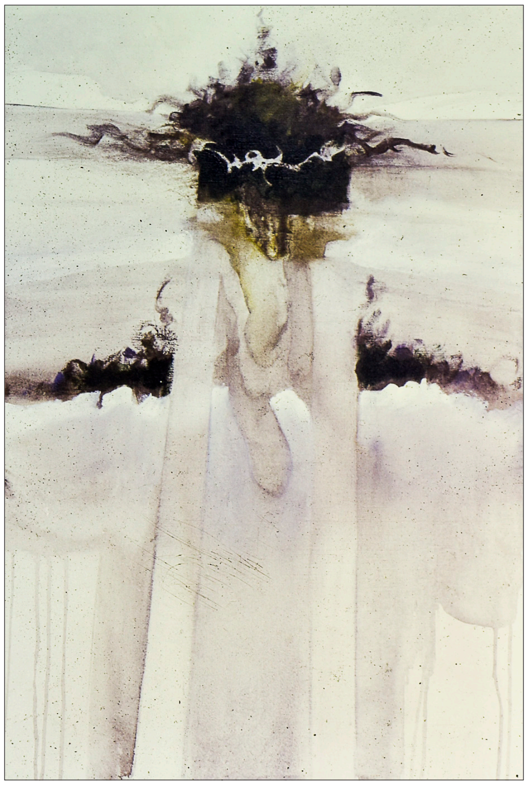

Mike Tegland, 1975, acrylic


Ron Reisdorff, 1975, acrylic

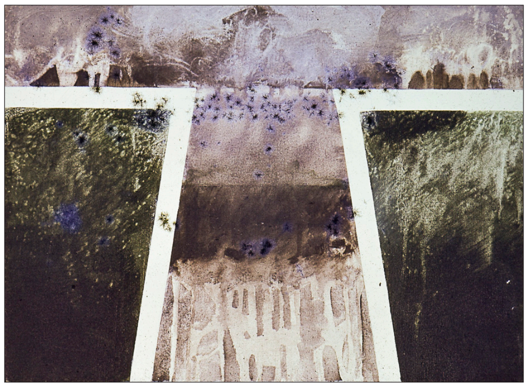

Ron Reisdorff, 1975, acrylic


Ron Reisdorff,
Absolute Zero at 90°, 1975

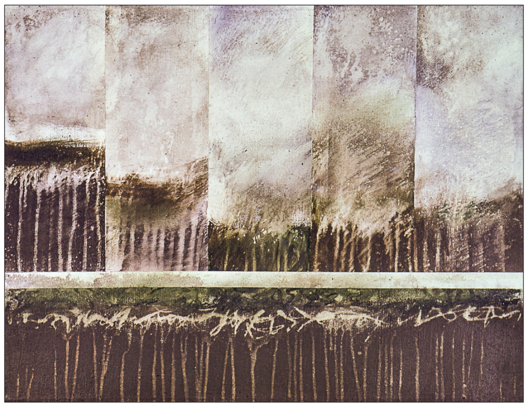

Ron Reisdorff, *Powerhouse*, 1975.
Acrylic, 72 x 96 in.



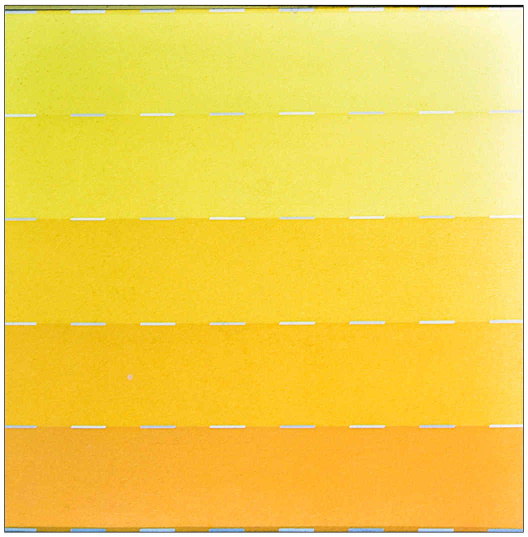
Tom Denich, 1975, acrylic



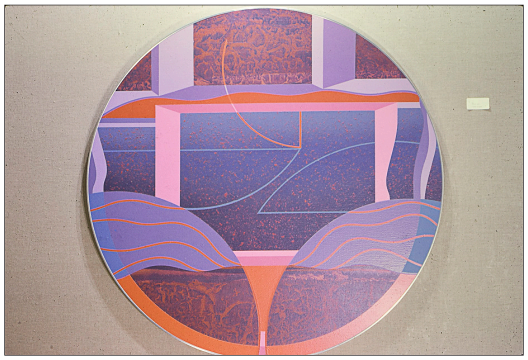
Tom Denich, *Summer Madness*, 1975.
18 x 24 in.



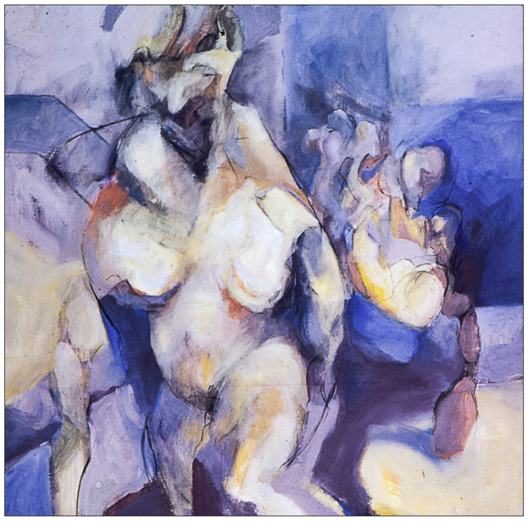
Tom Denich, Untitled, 1975, 24 x 30 in.



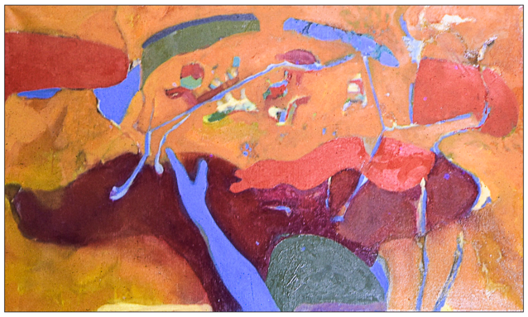
John Derry, 1975, acrylic



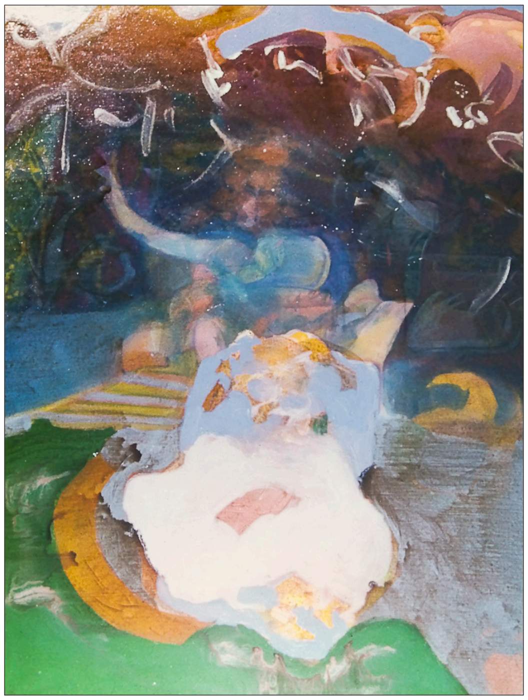
Jeffery Seng, 1975, 48-in. diameter



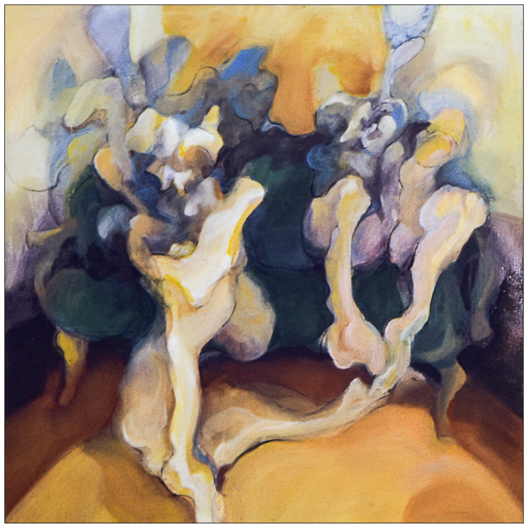
Steve Petersen, 1975, oil



Steve Petersen, 1975, oil



Steve Petersen, 1975, oil

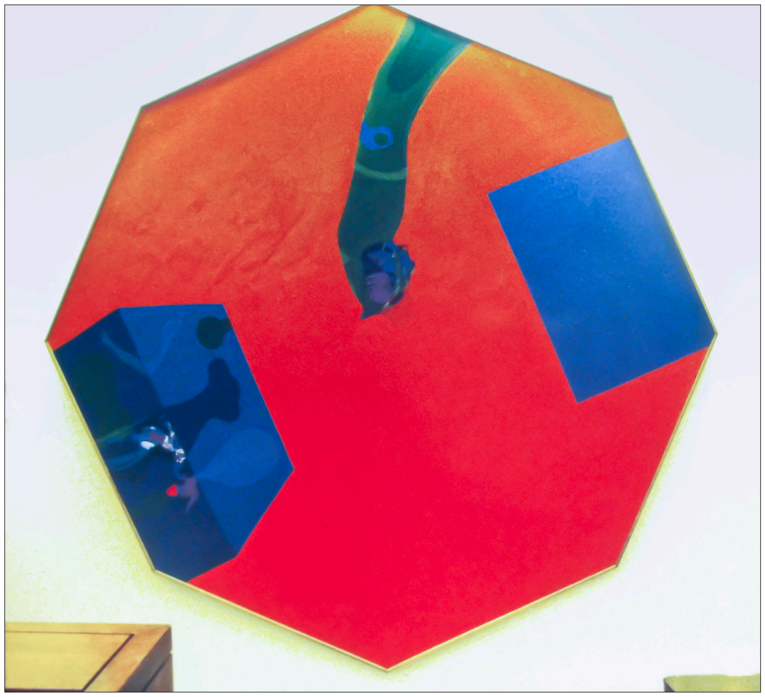


Steve Petersen, *Monte-Maya*, 1975,
60 x 54 in.

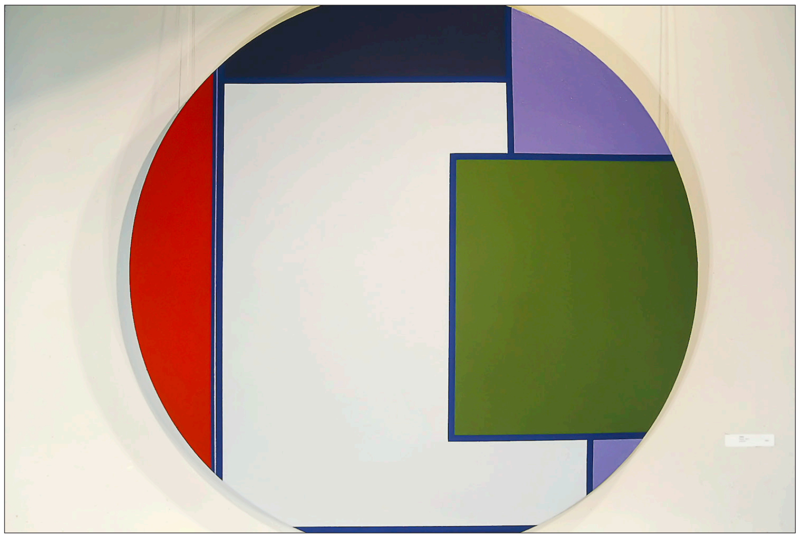
Tondos: 1970s through 2000s

Somehow—and I have no idea how he pulled off this magic trick—my father began making perfectly round paintings ("tondos") in the early 1970s. He'd already flirted with shapes other than rectangles, as these octagonal pieces from the 1960s demonstrate.

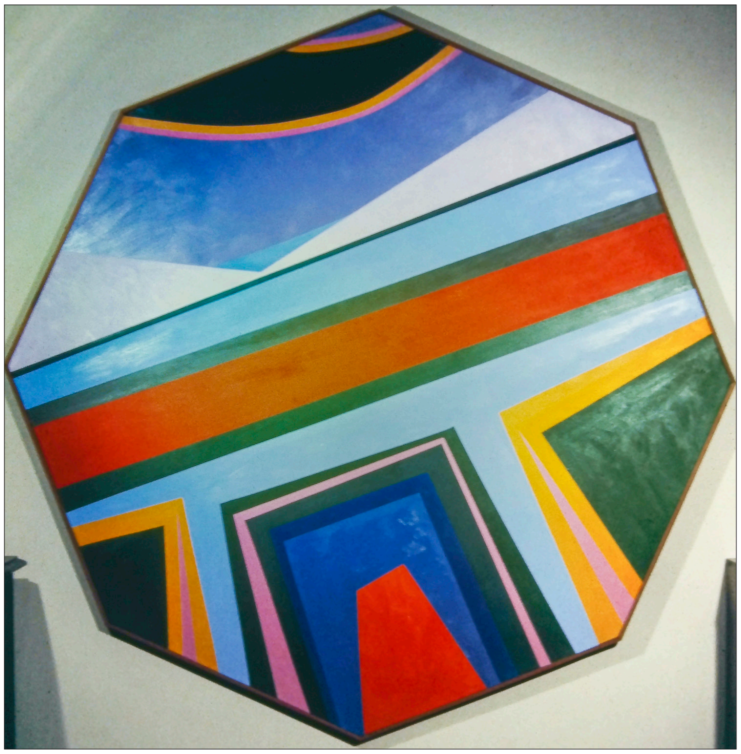
But perfectly round canvases are a special challenge. How to keep the edges from rumpling up? How to keep the edge from snapping out? I have no idea. I do know that they were difficult enough to construct that my father produced only a handful of them.



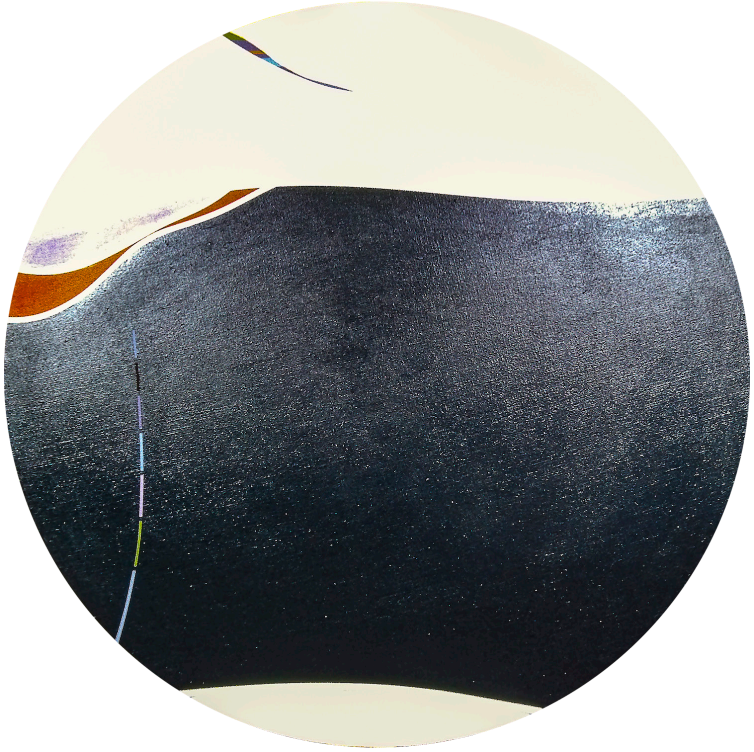
Octagon I, 1966. Oil on canvas. Collection of Kutak Rock.



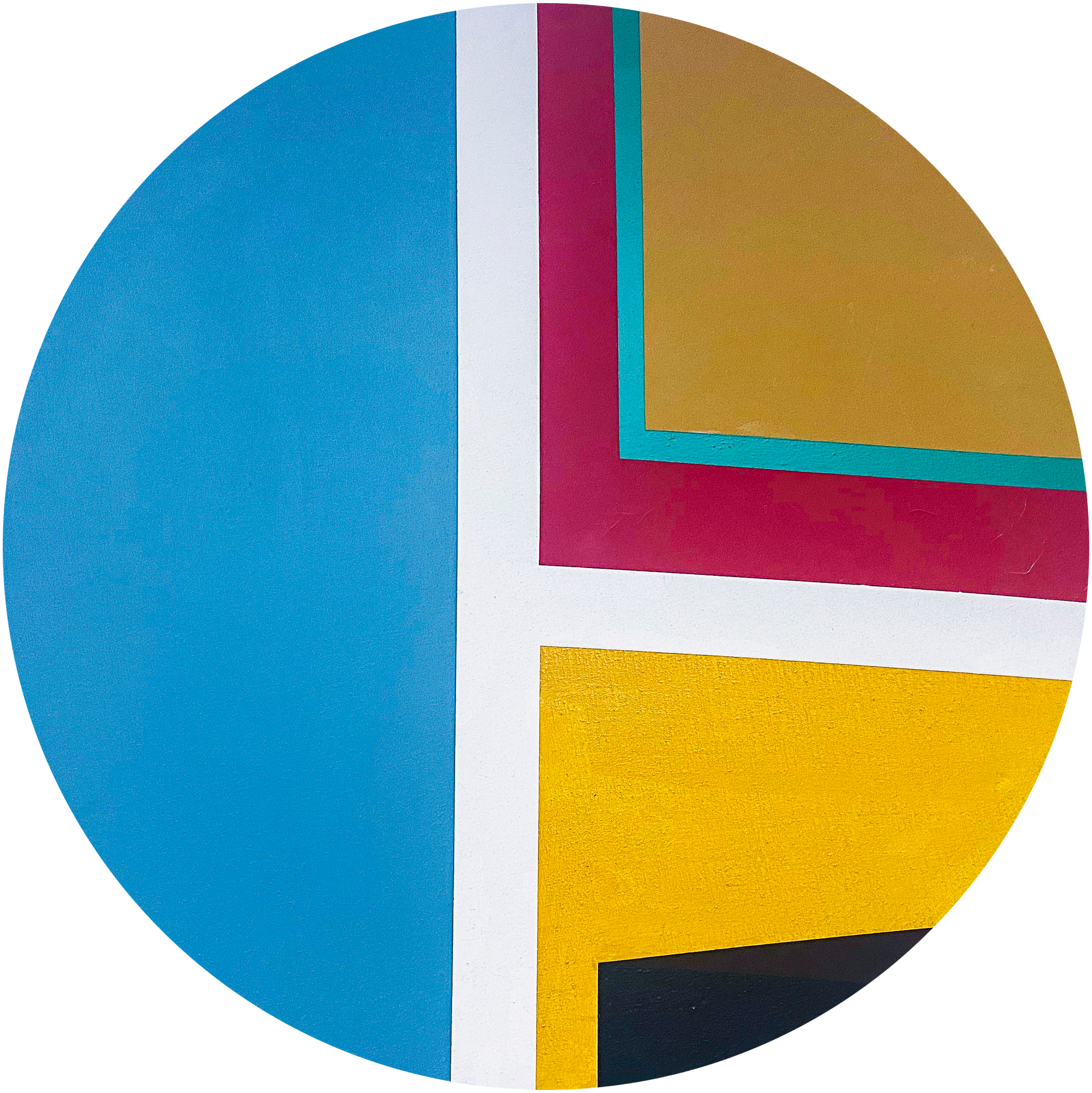
Tondo, 1974. Acrylic on canvas.



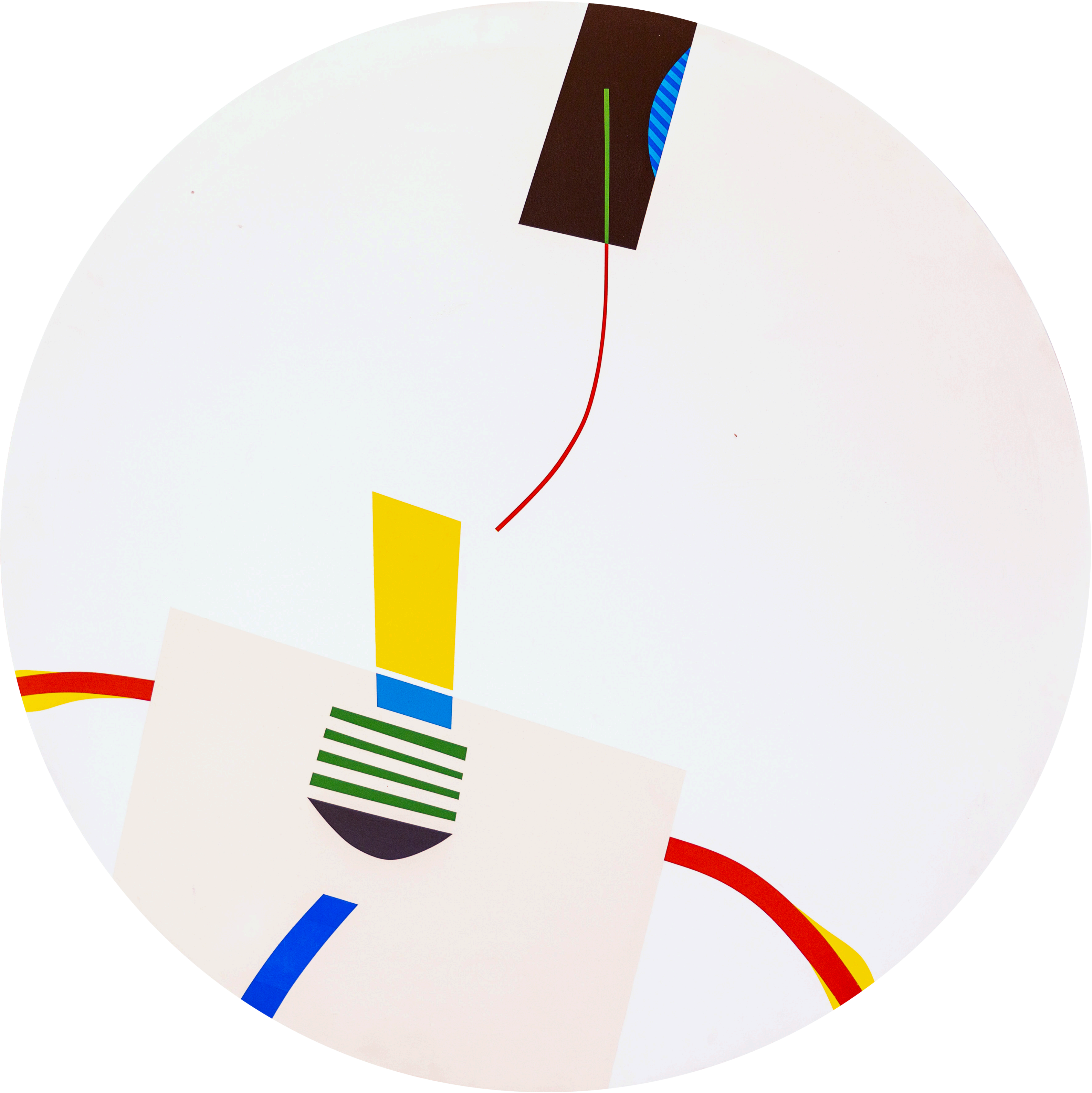
Octagon, 1966. Oil on canvas.



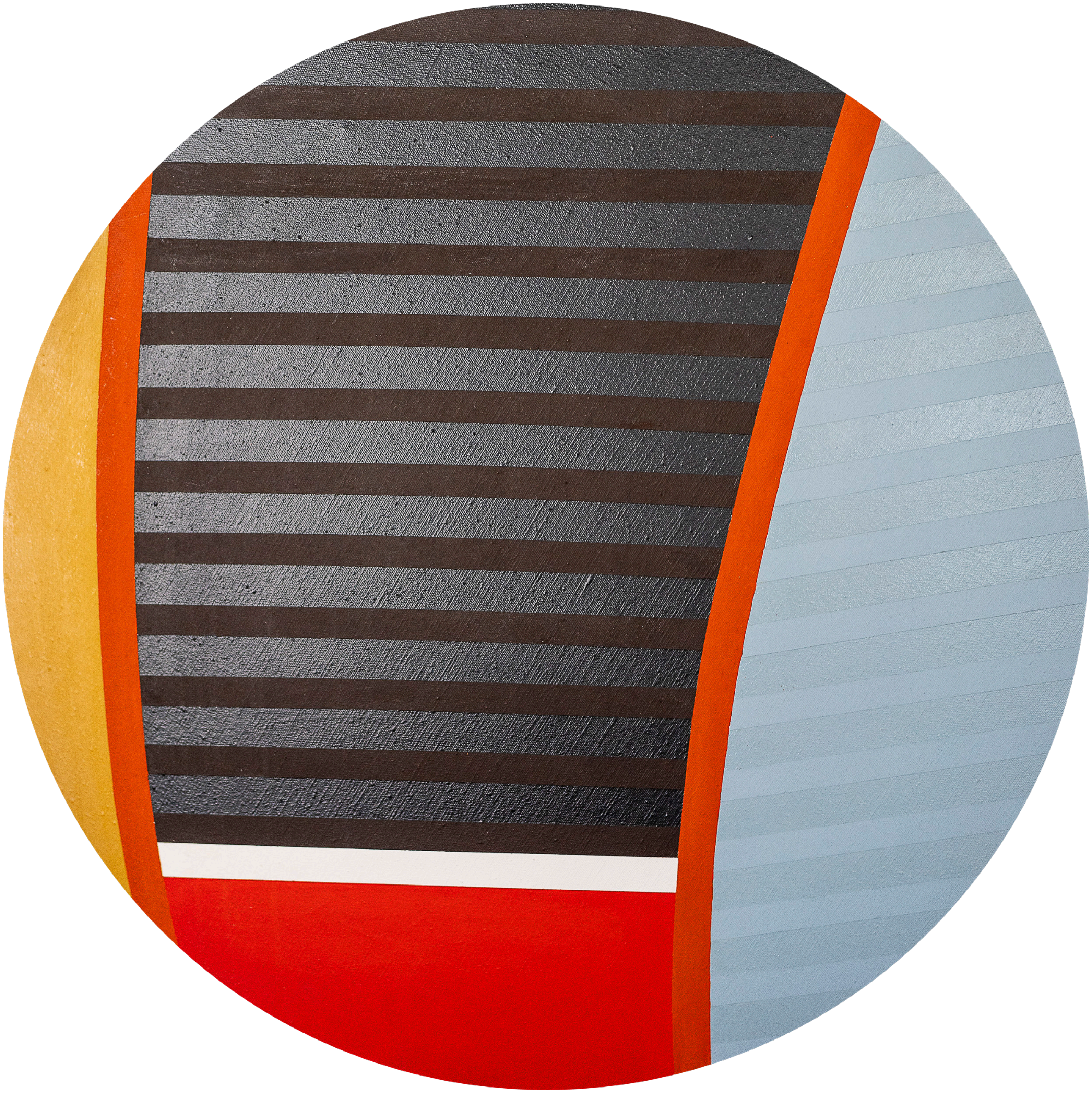
Tondo, 1973. Acrylic on canvas.



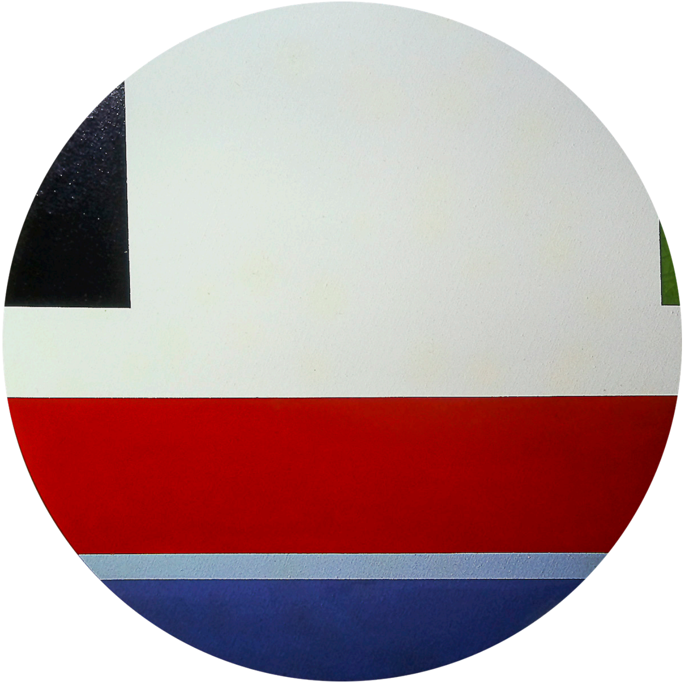
1972. Acrylic on canvas, 33-inch diameter.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



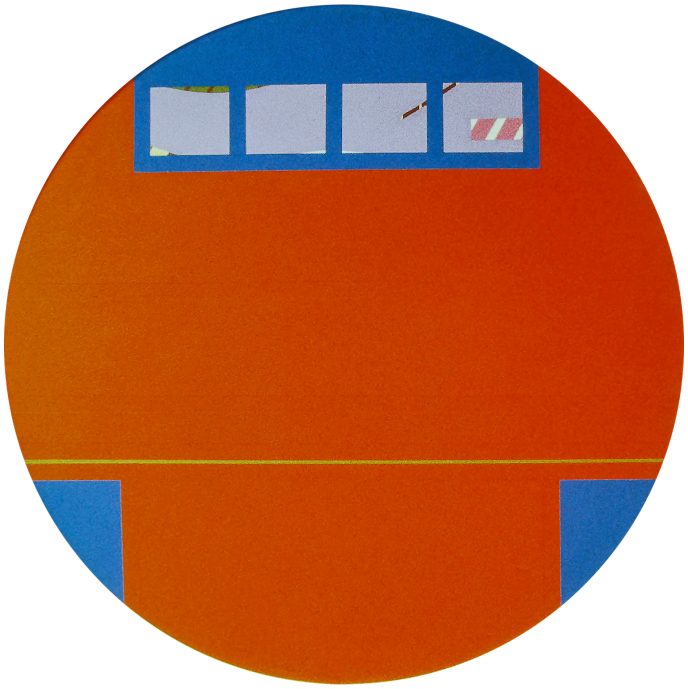
Acrylic on canvas.
Collection of Dana and Scott Porter.



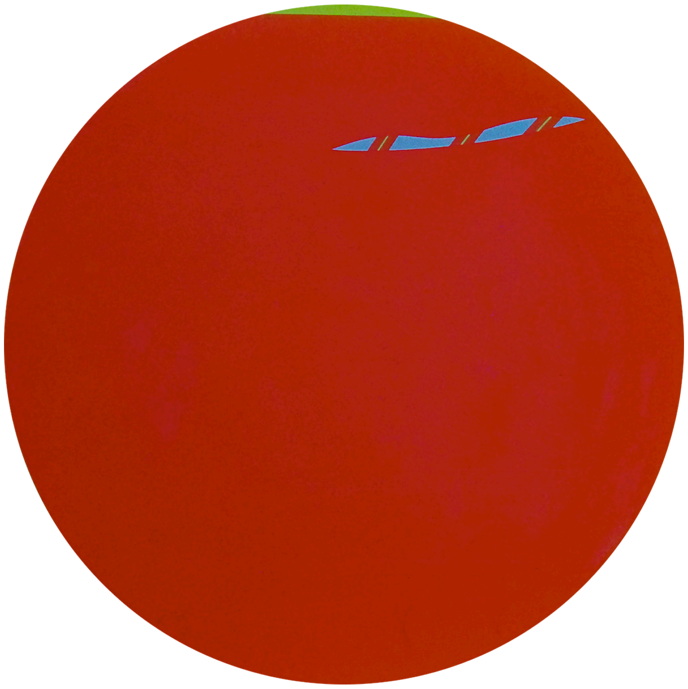
Acrylic on canvas.
Collection of Katy and Jon Welles.



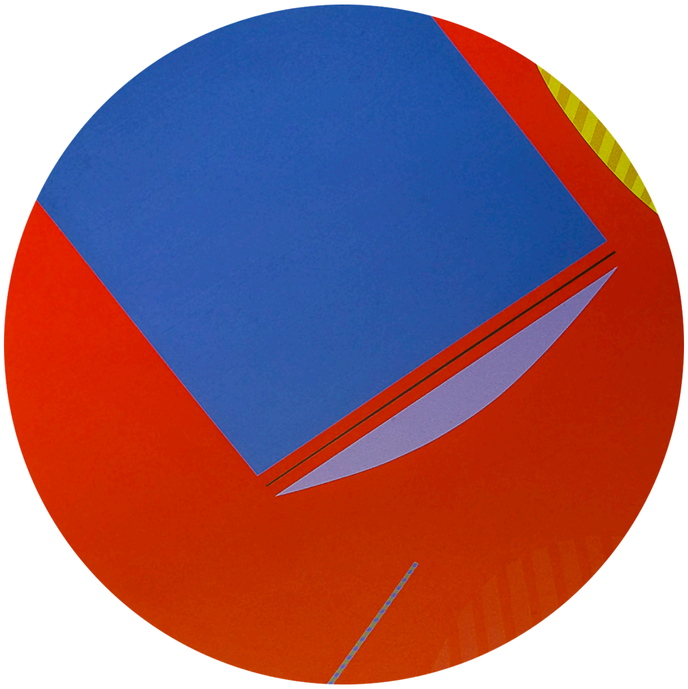
1972. Acrylic on canvas.



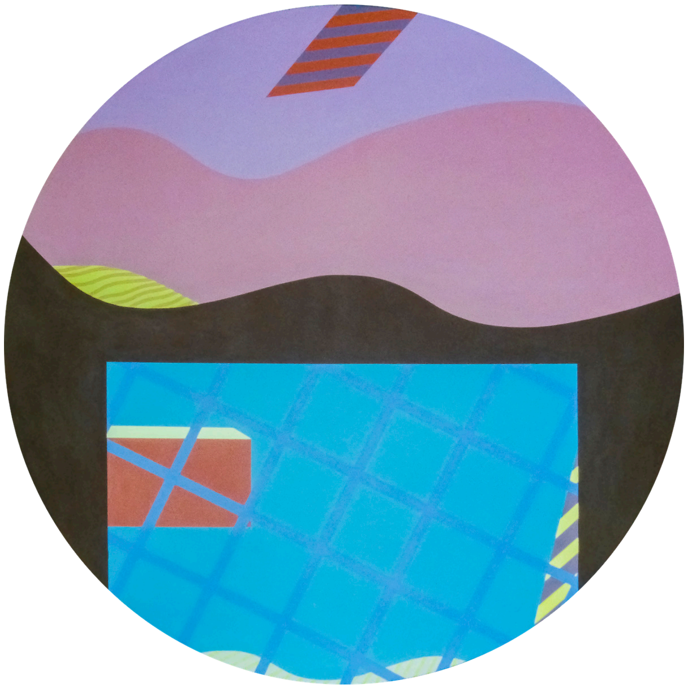
Windows I, 1975. Acrylic on canvas, 30 in. diameter.



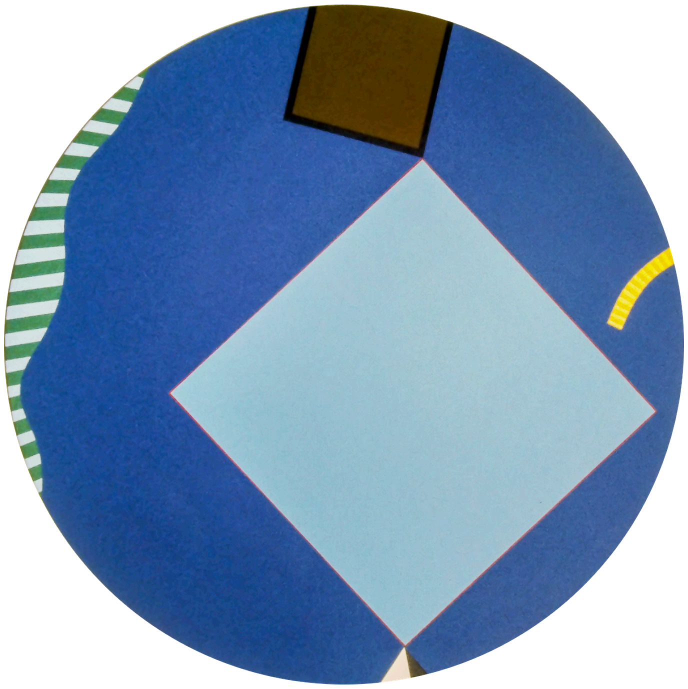
1974. Acrylic on canvas, 43 in. diameter.



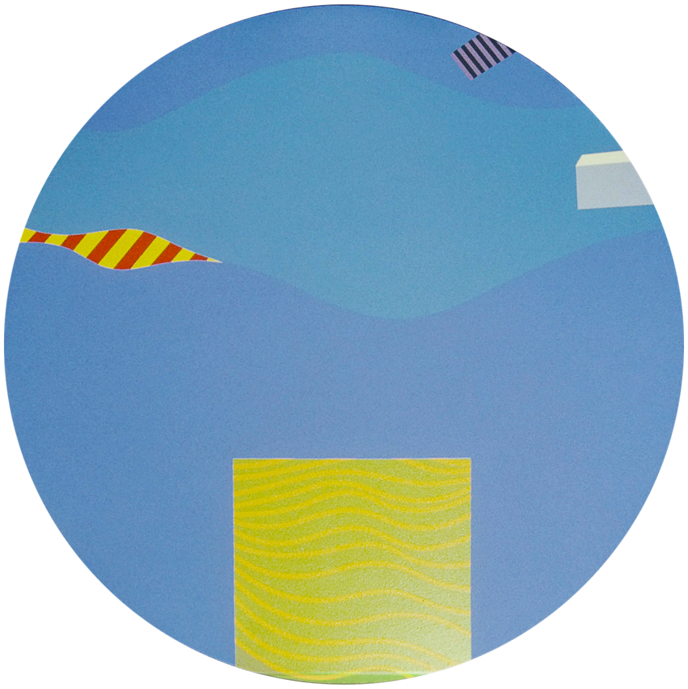
1975. Acrylic on canvas, 43 in. diameter.



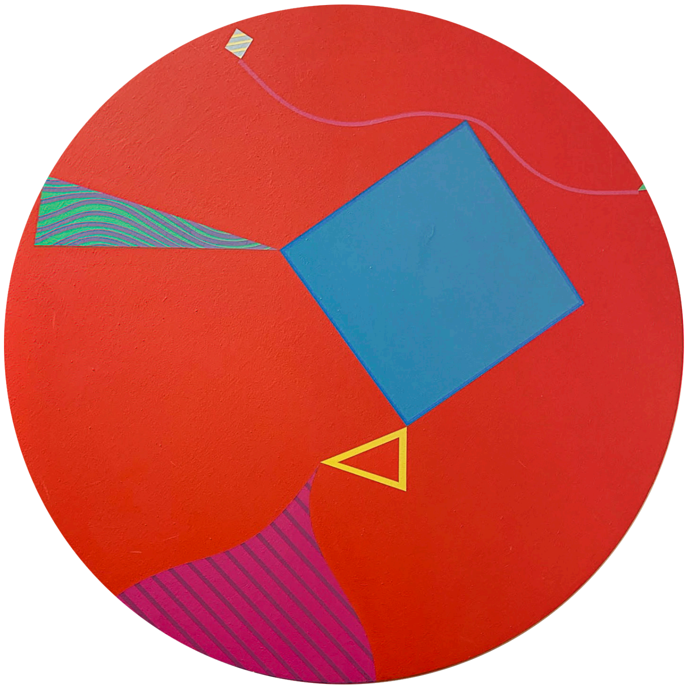
1980. Acrylic on canvas, 47 in. diameter.



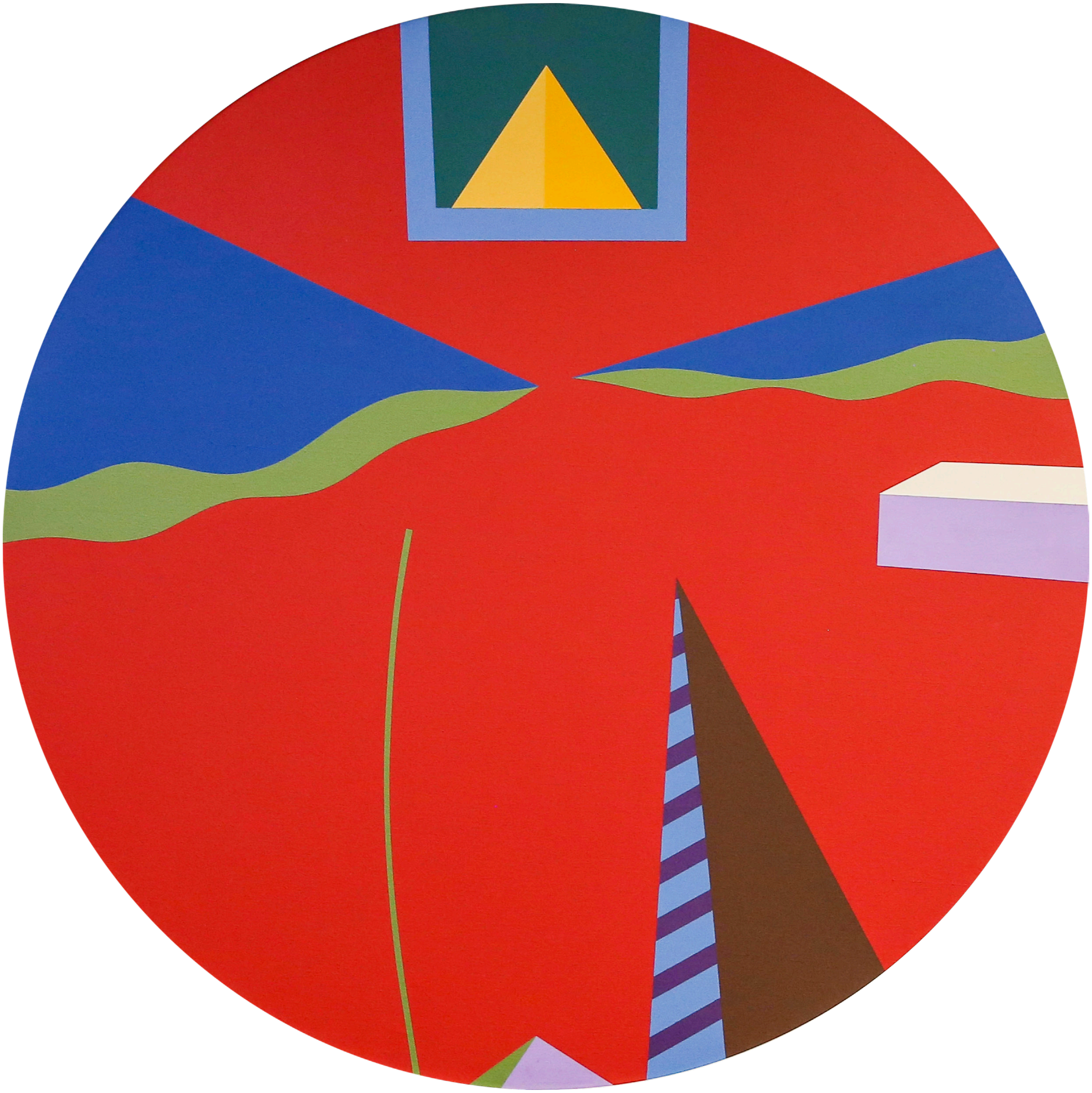
1995. Acrylic on canvas, 37 in. diameter.



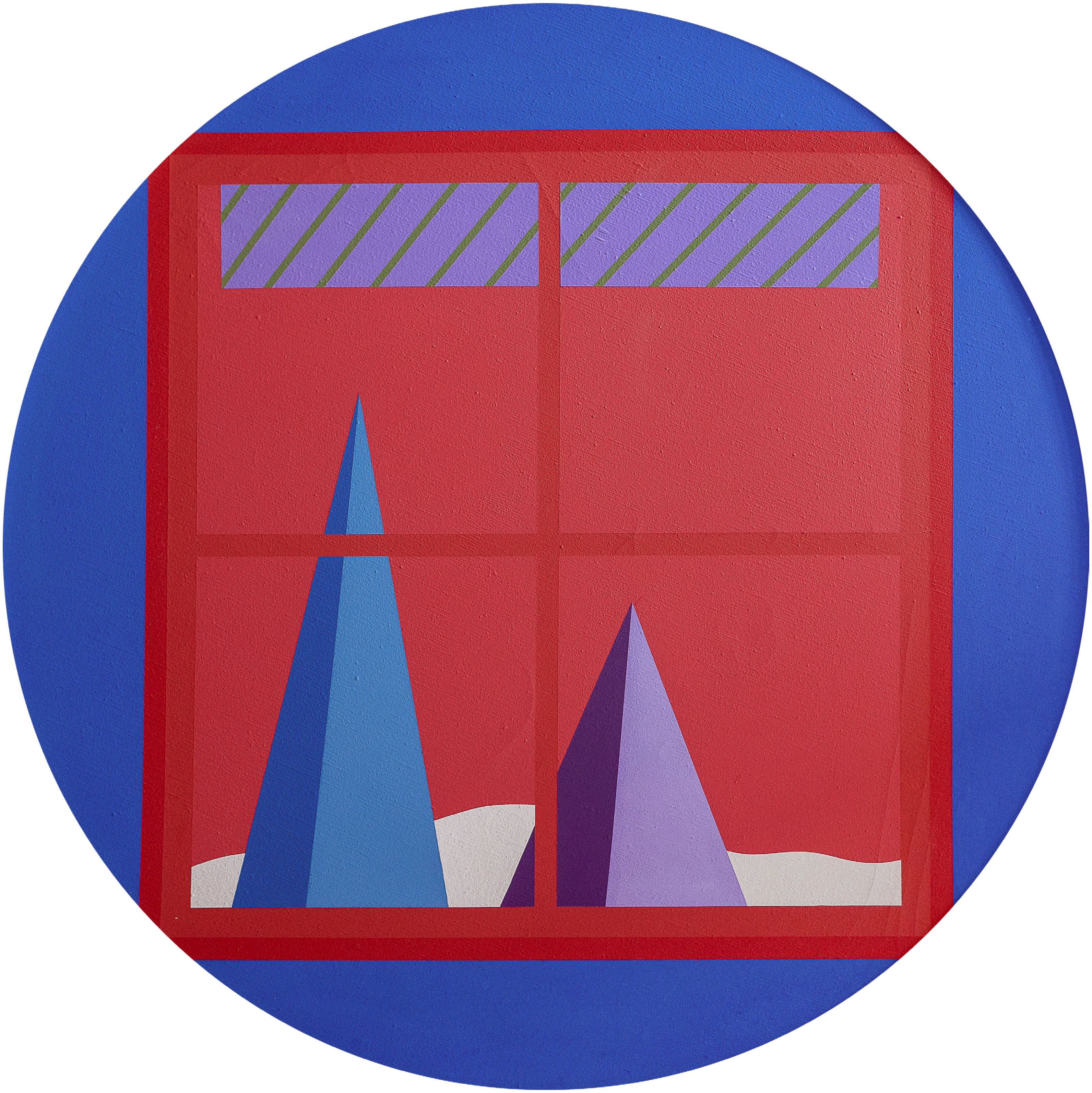
1980. Acrylic on canvas, 37 in. diameter.



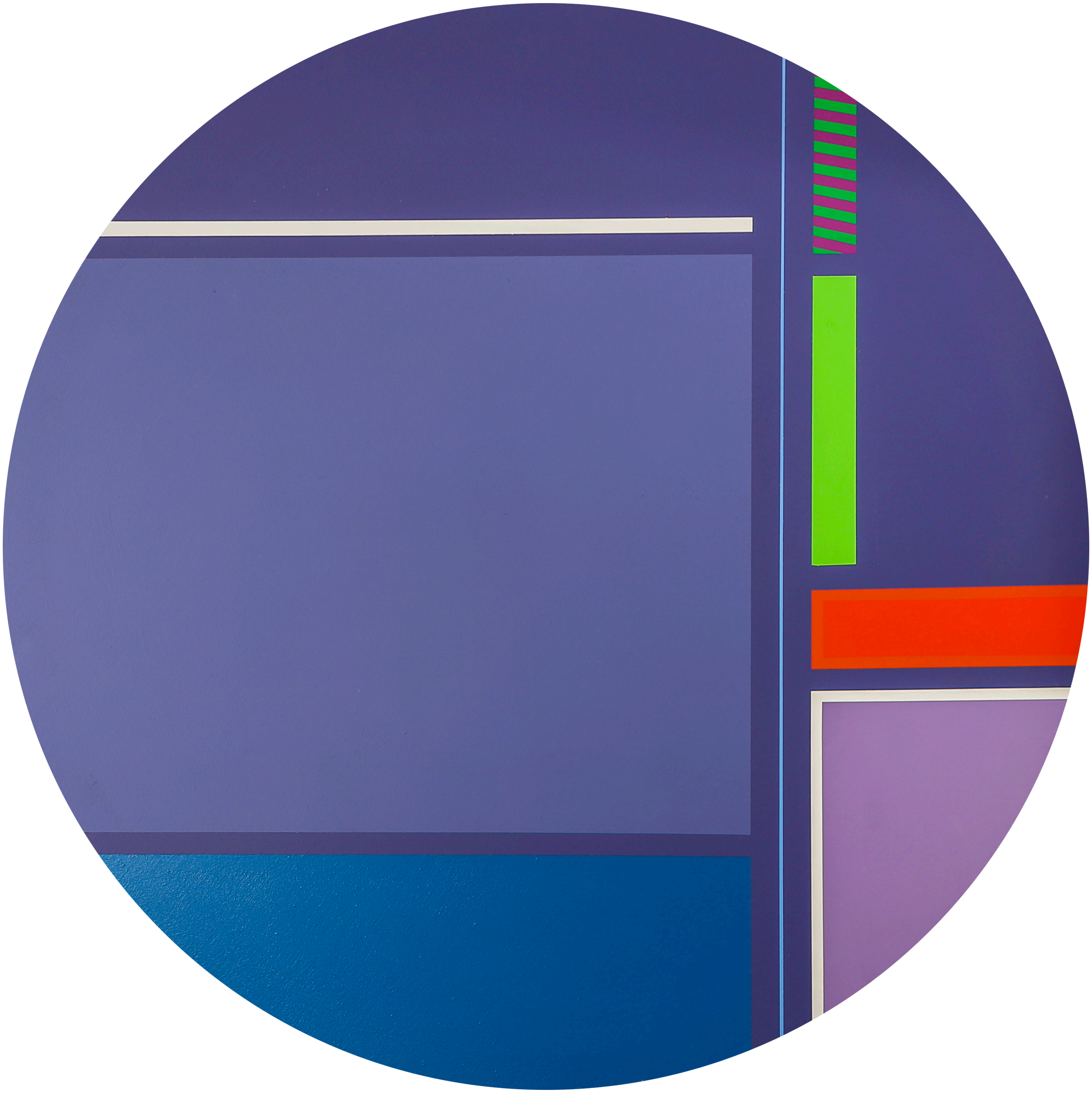
2003. Acrylic on canvas.
Collection of Meghan Freeman and Evan Porter.



1976. Acrylic on canvas, 43-inch diameter.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.



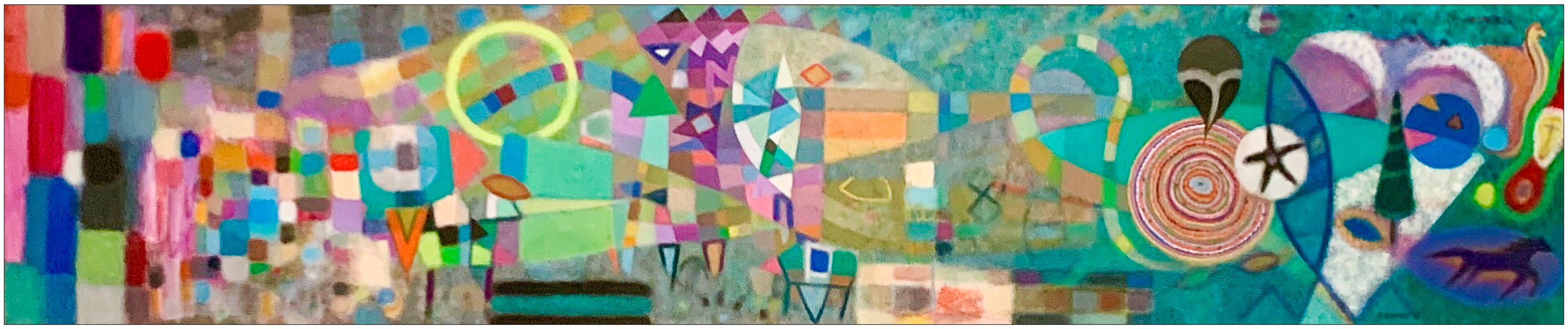
1977. Acrylic on canvas, 38-inch diameter.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.



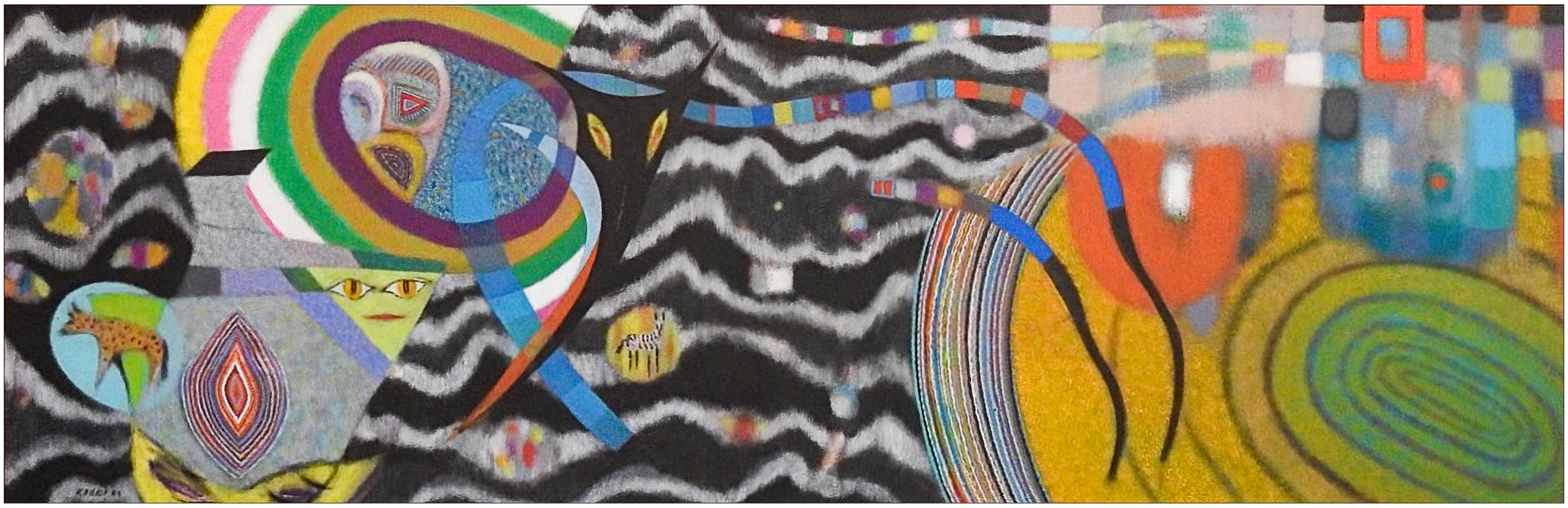
1987. Acrylic on canvas, 39-inch diameter.
Collection of Meghan Freeman and Evan Porter.

Remembrance by Ron Bishop

Ron Bishop received a BFA from UNO and an MFA from the Cranbrook Academy of Art. Before retiring in 2013, he was the Director of the Rauschenberg Gallery at Edison State College (now Florida Southwestern State College). While at the Rauschenberg Gallery he developed or curated nearly 100 exhibitions. He also designed and oversaw the Museum of Medical History and the Rush Collections Gallery.



Ron Bishop. *Fables of Life*. Acrylic on canvas, 12 x 58 in.



Ron Bishop. *Guardian of Time*. Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 56 in.

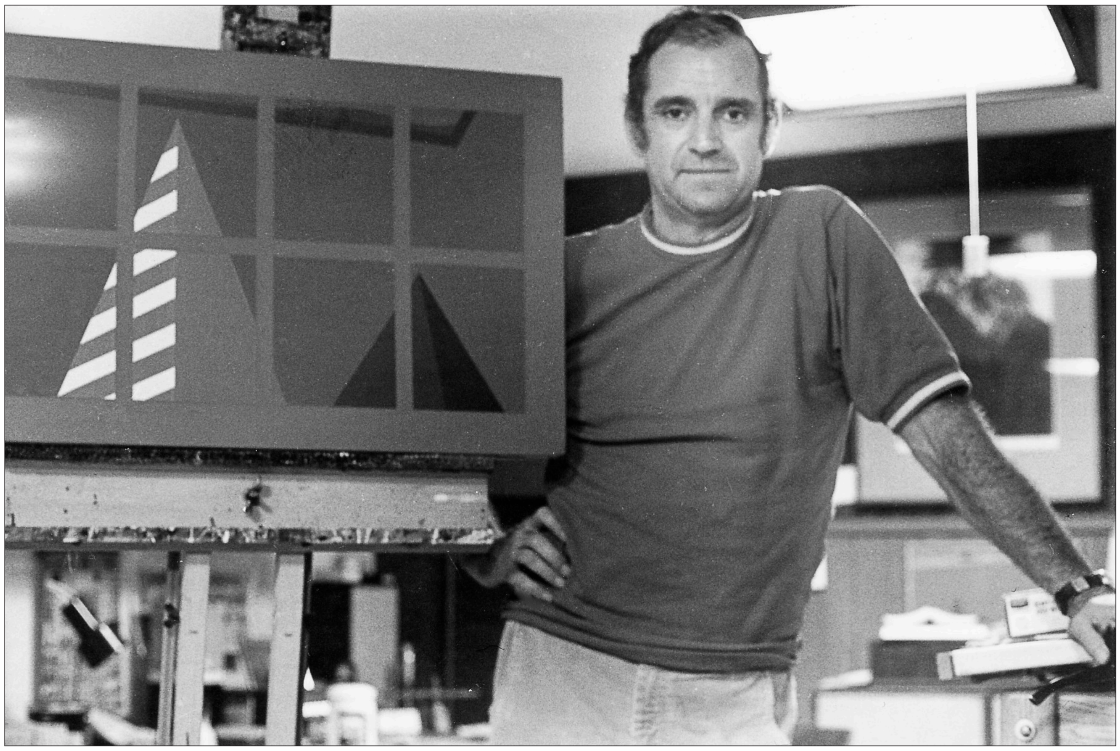
I had all my painting classes at UNO with Peter. His guidance was always clear, to the point and supportive. Classes with Peter were insightful and even entertaining, with his ever-present sense of humor. Peter was a gifted artist and teacher that knew how to guide students in a way that was both encouraging and instructive.

A favorite experience that I had with Peter though was not academic. One summer Peter asked if I wanted to go fishing for a week or so when he went to Canada to open up the lake house for the summer. I had never been to Canada or fishing for muskies—it was a quick yes! We had a great trip—gorgeous surroundings, great fishing, good company and just a fun time.

I felt fortunate to have Peter as an instructor and also to know him as a friend. I can also say, without reservation, that Peter helped me develop a foundation that would lead to graduate school and a rewarding career in the arts.

—Ron Bishop

Firmly Established: 1976 to 1979



Peter Hill in his studio basement with a pyramid painting, 1979 or 1980

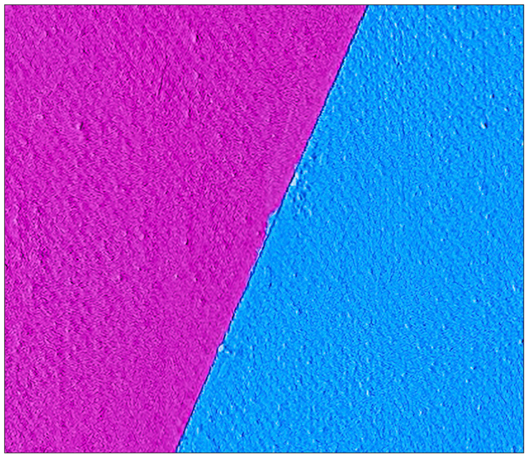
In 1976 a motif hit my father's practice like a ton of bricks: pyramids. They dominate 1976 through 1979. There were more than pyramids, though. Windows, grids, prisms, stripy mounds, snaky lines—all made by masking tape, acrylic paint, rollers, and brushes. Here I'll say something about my father's process. (In my descriptions, assume he applies at least two coats of paint each time, and probably many more.)

Suppose he wanted a magenta triangle in a sky-blue background.

- First, he'd use a roller to lay down a perfectly smooth blue field over the entire canvas.
- After the paint dried, he'd lay down masking tape to form the triangle; the area enclosed by the tape is the desired shape.
- The next (and essential) step would be to paint inside the triangle using the *same color blue* as the field—particularly over the edge of the tape defining the triangle's sides. Painting the edge made a tight seal that would keep later paint applications from leaking under the tape.
- After the paint dried, he would fill the shape with magenta.
- After more drying, he'd carefully pull up the tape.

If all went well, a crisp magenta triangle would glow on the blue.

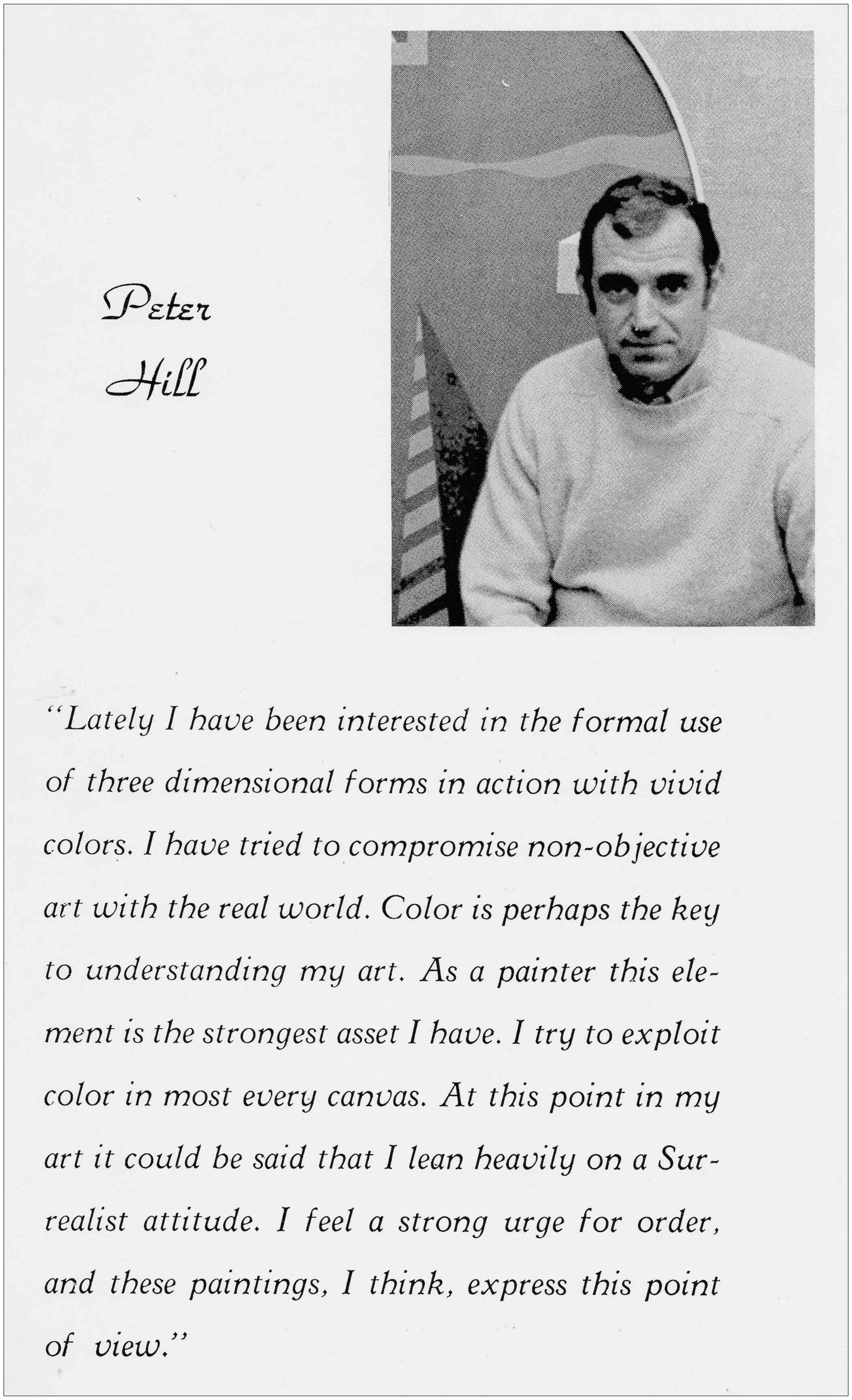
But the sharp edge was never guaranteed. Sometimes paint would leak under the masking tape anyway. When that happened, he'd use fine brushes to mask the leak. Worse was when pulling the tape pulled up paint and tore the shape. I was with him a few times when that happened, and few things frustrated him more. I still hear the noise he made, a guttural "Gaaah." I make that noise, myself.



A flaw in the edge of a magenta triangle

His public life was busier than in 1973–75. In 1978, *Regardez Encore Une Fois* (p. 272) received the "best painting" award at the Joslyn Biennial. He also had three shows: one at Wayne State University (Nebraska), one at the Sheldon, and one at Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville.

And his private life? On August 20, 1979, came the last of Peter and Jody's six children: Mary Elizabeth Hill. My mother was 42, and my father was 45.



Peter
Hill

"Lately I have been interested in the formal use of three dimensional forms in action with vivid colors. I have tried to compromise non-objective art with the real world. Color is perhaps the key to understanding my art. As a painter this element is the strongest asset I have. I try to exploit color in most every canvas. At this point in my art it could be said that I lean heavily on a Surrealist attitude. I feel a strong urge for order, and these paintings, I think, express this point of view."

From a pamphlet of an exhibition featuring Peter Hill, Sidney Buchanan, and Robert Hower at the Paul Lynn & Associates Fine Art Gallery, February 25 through March 25, 1976.

Omaha World-Herald, April 30, 1978

Hill's 'Temporary' Omaha Stay

In 1958 Peter Hill, fresh out of college, came to Omaha for his first teaching job. He planned to stay for five years and then move to greener pastures.

He didn't, and now, 20 years later, Hill is firmly established as a landmark in the Omaha art scene.

He has a solid, enviable reputation as a painter and an art instructor at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Hill's paintings hang in museums, galleries, corporate offices and private collections.

He has exhibited one-man shows in the Joslyn Museum here and at the Sheldon Gallery in Lincoln. Most recently, his painting "Regardez Encore Une Fois" [p. 272] took first prize at the 15th Joslyn biennial exhibition.

Hill figures that as a teacher, he has taught nearly 8,000 students in various courses. He estimates that 200 of them have learned to paint under his guidance.

Not Sorry

Hill spends nearly five hours a day painting at home. His works are abstractions that integrate sharply defined segments of color. He makes no apologies for the effort and education his pieces often demand from viewers.

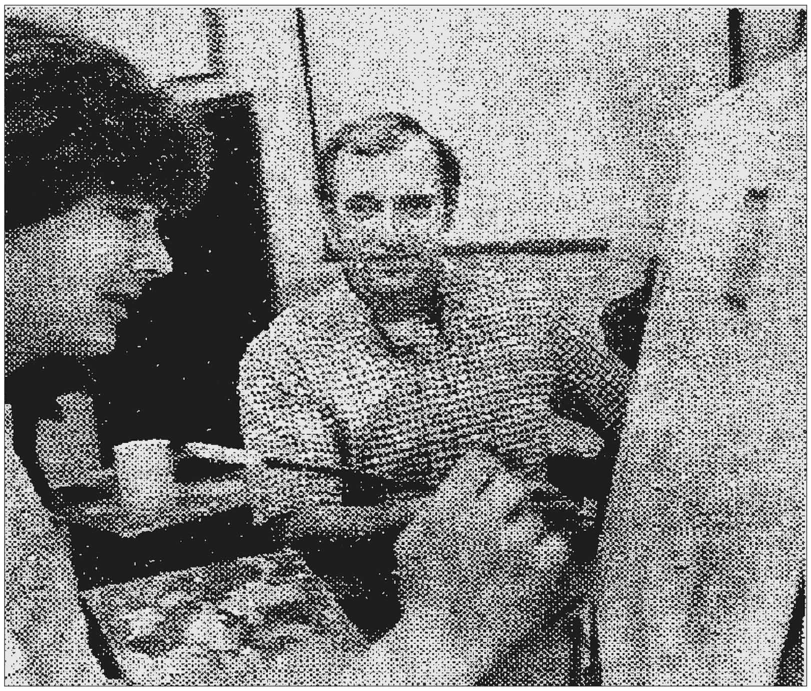
"I don't strive for popularity in what I do," he said. "No one who paints like I do is trying for it."

Hill's early work was strongly influenced by the abstract expressionist movement that developed during the 1950s, the years when he was doing his first work on canvas.

His idols at that time were painters like Mark Rothko, Hans Hofmann, and Willem de Kooning. Today, Hill looks more at his own body of works for inspiration and direction.

"By this time I'm kind of self-involved, much more so than I was 10 years ago," he said.

"I work the same way I always have, off instinct and off the last painting I've completed. I stand in front of the canvas with a feeling that something must be done and I try to figure out what it is."



Student Dan Devening paints with Peter Hill looking on.

Intimidated

Hill said people who complain about abstract and conceptual art are often those who expect too much from the works. They look for hidden meanings and complexities that may not exist.

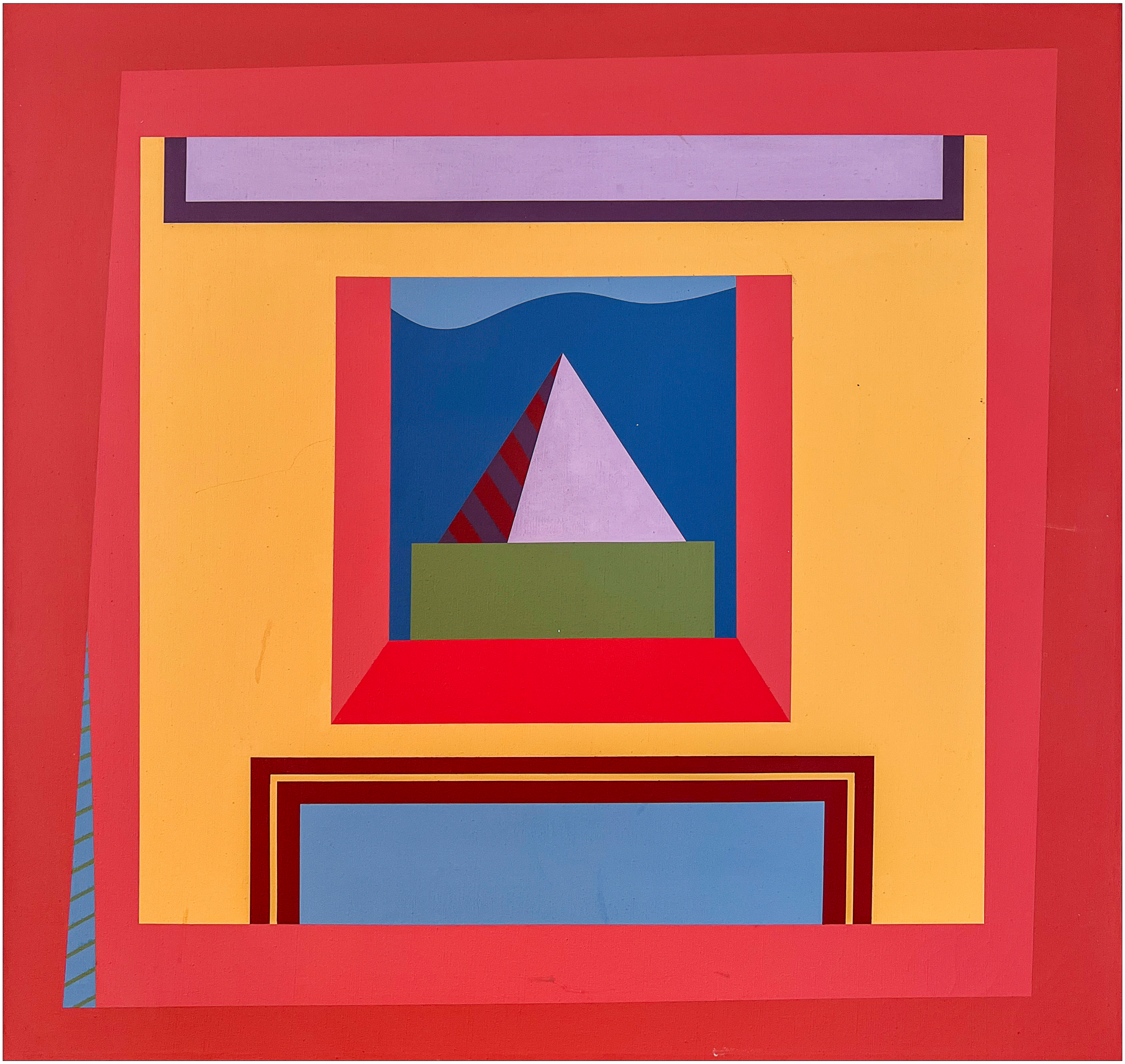
"This is the hardest thing for people to understand," he said. "The general public is sometimes intimidated by the heavy intellectualism associated with art. The way to look at something is as what it is. Don't try to make anything of it."

If people complain to Hill that his work is not art because it lacks trees, people or other recognizable objects, he does not try to change their minds.

"I don't argue about art because I think you can't solve anything about it with words," he said. "It's an unresolvable subject."

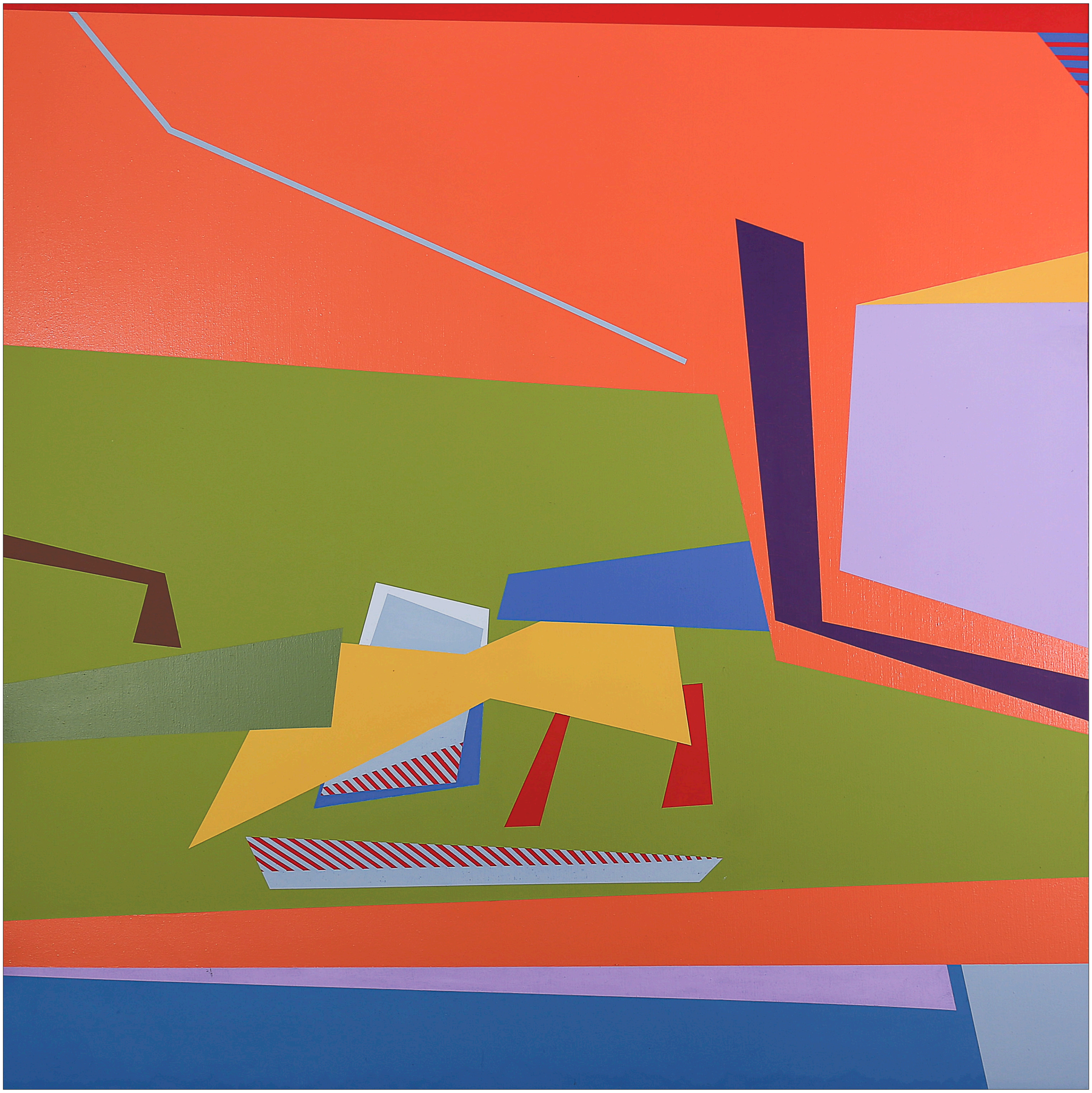
Hill dabbled with other art mediums early in his career but decided to stick with paints.

"A good painter can upstage everyone else," he said. "Sculpture, weaving, printing—the qualities of these things can be created on canvas. The painter has the world at his fingertips."



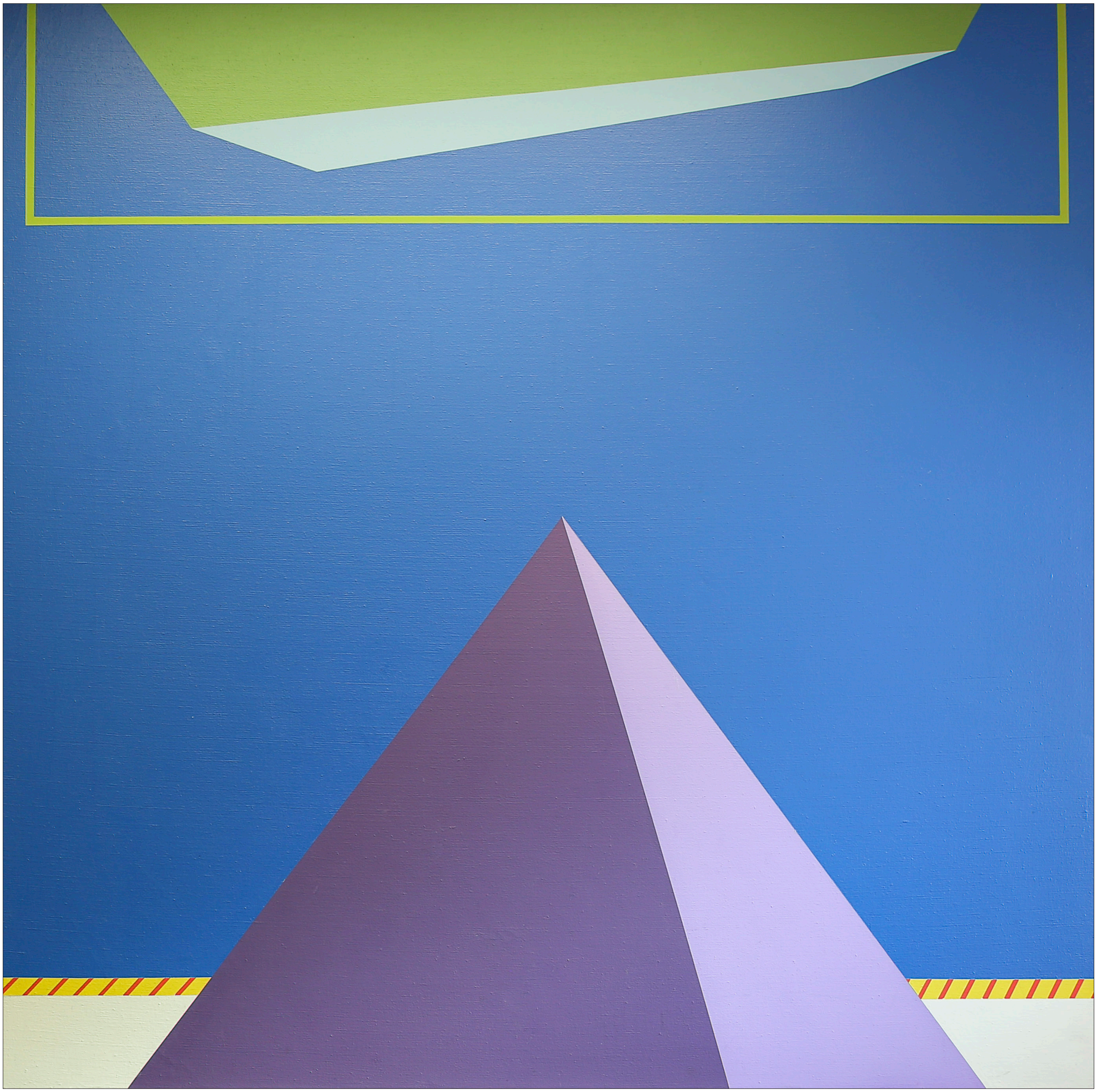
Untitled

1976. Acrylic on canvas, 39 x 41 in.
Collection of Haven and Simmy Pell.



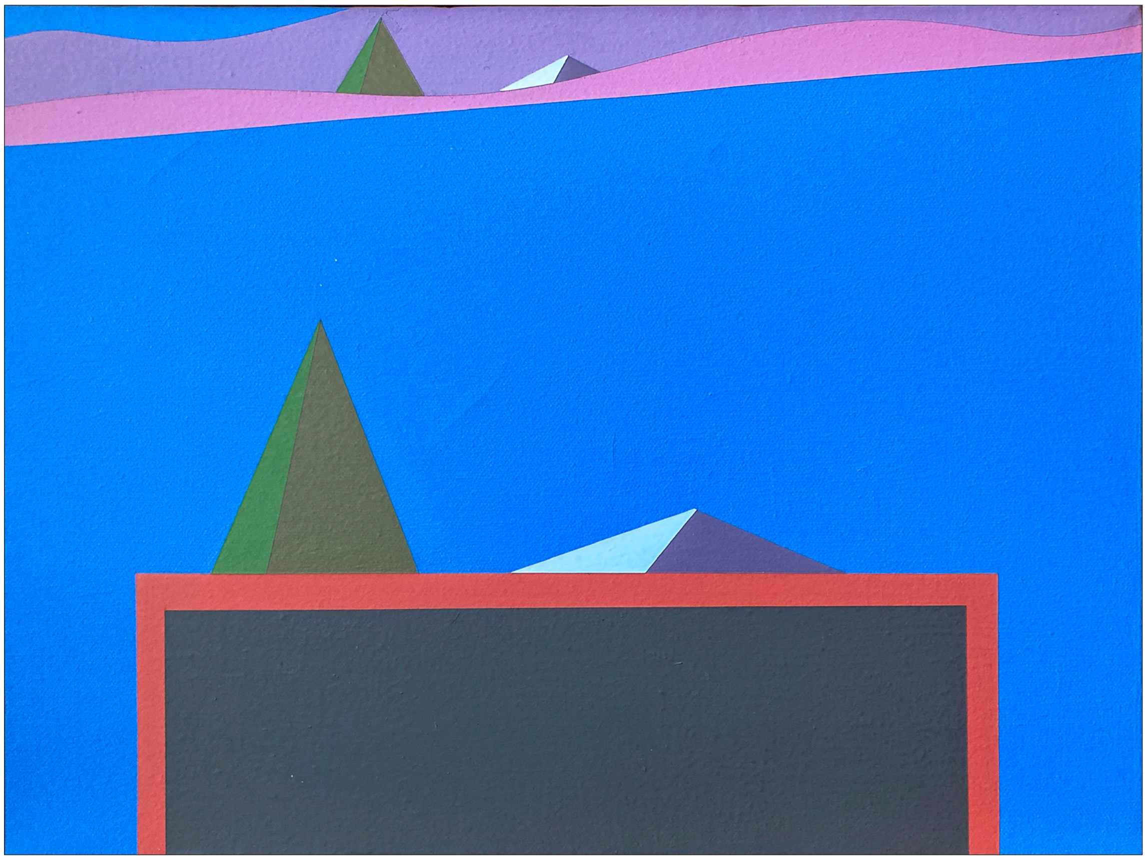
Untitled

1976. Acrylic on canvas, 59 x 59 in.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.

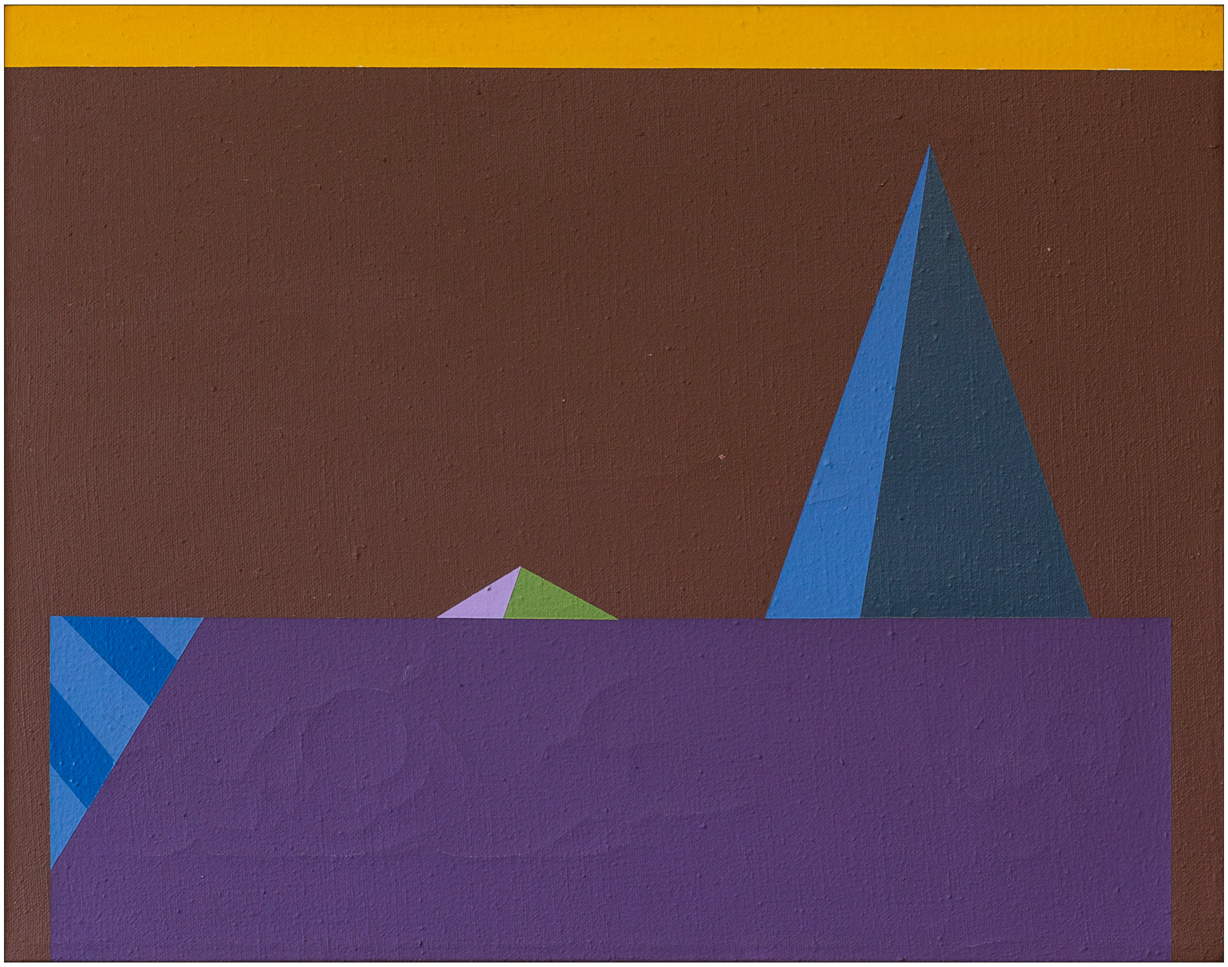


Khufu

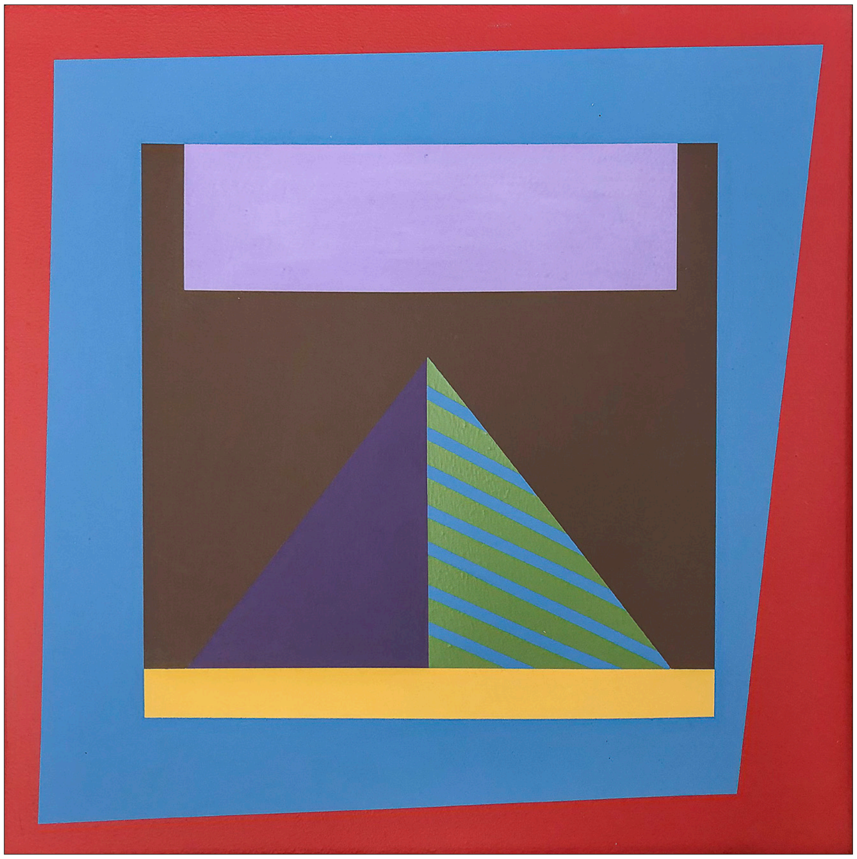
1976. Acrylic on canvas, 59 x 59 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



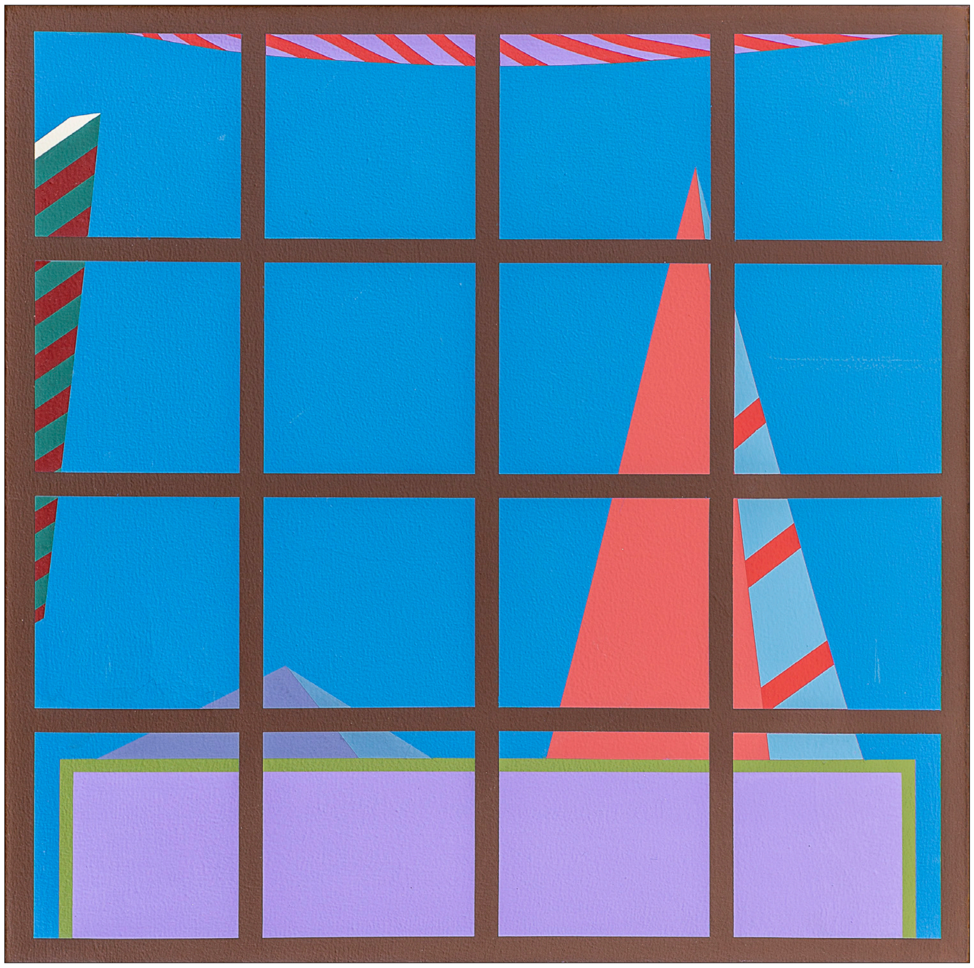
Untitled, 1978. Acrylic on canvas, 12 x 16 in. Collection of Marilyn Rock.



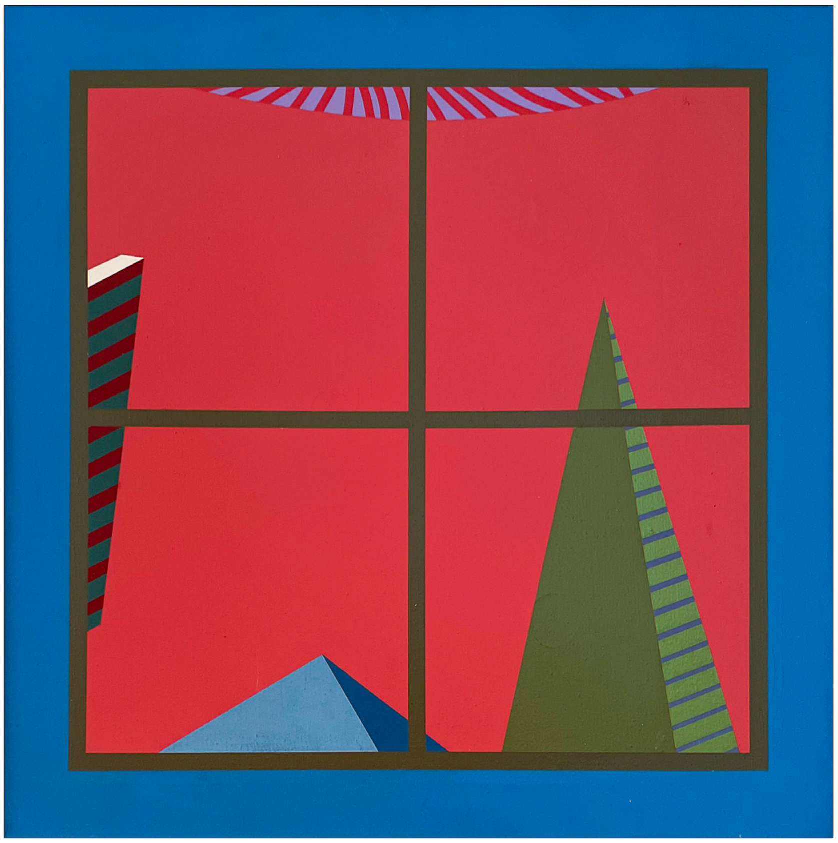
Still Life, 1976. Acrylic on canvas, 14.5 x 18.5 in. Collection of Kristin and Greg Janisch.



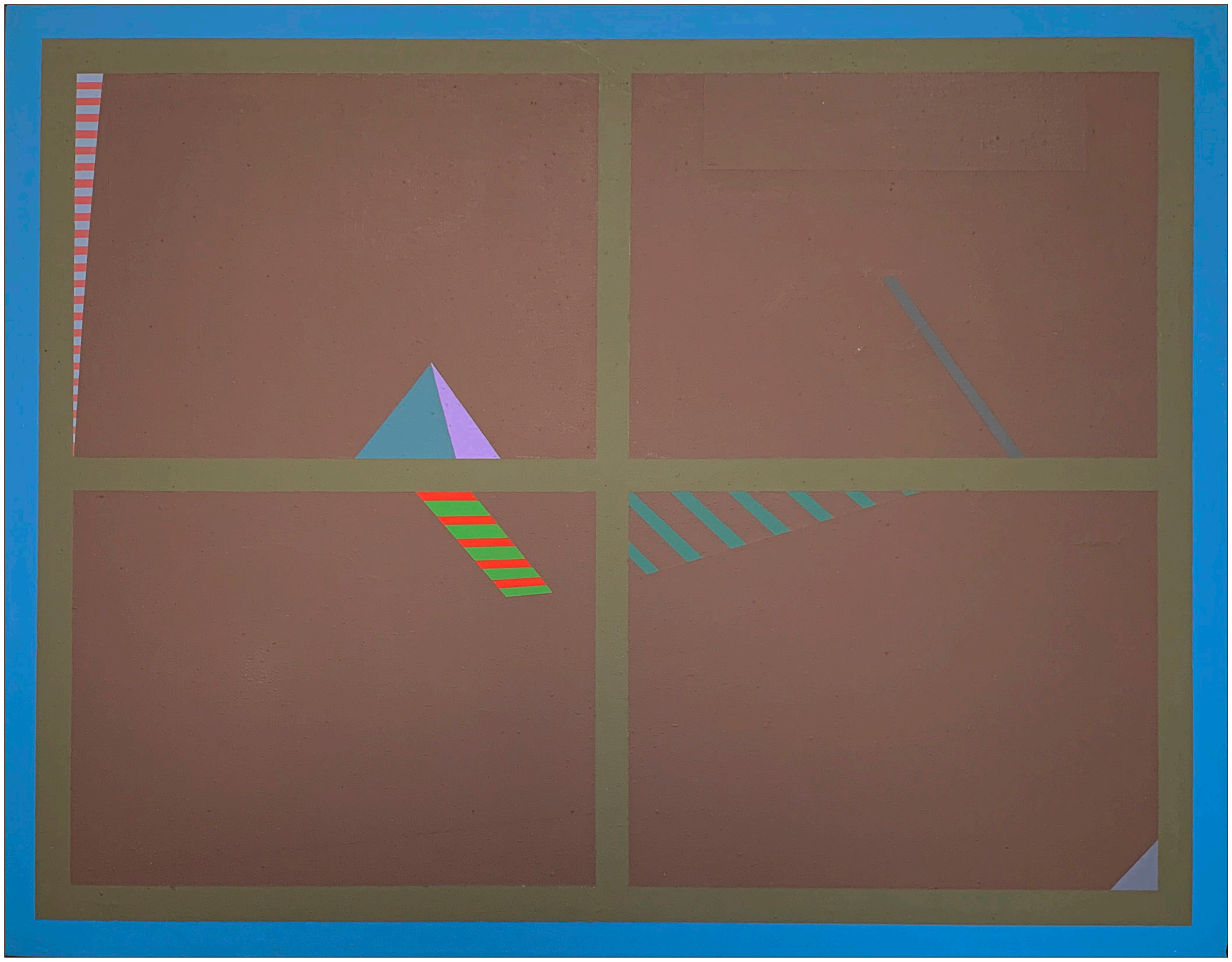
Untitled, 1977. Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 18 in.
Collection of Jim Butler.



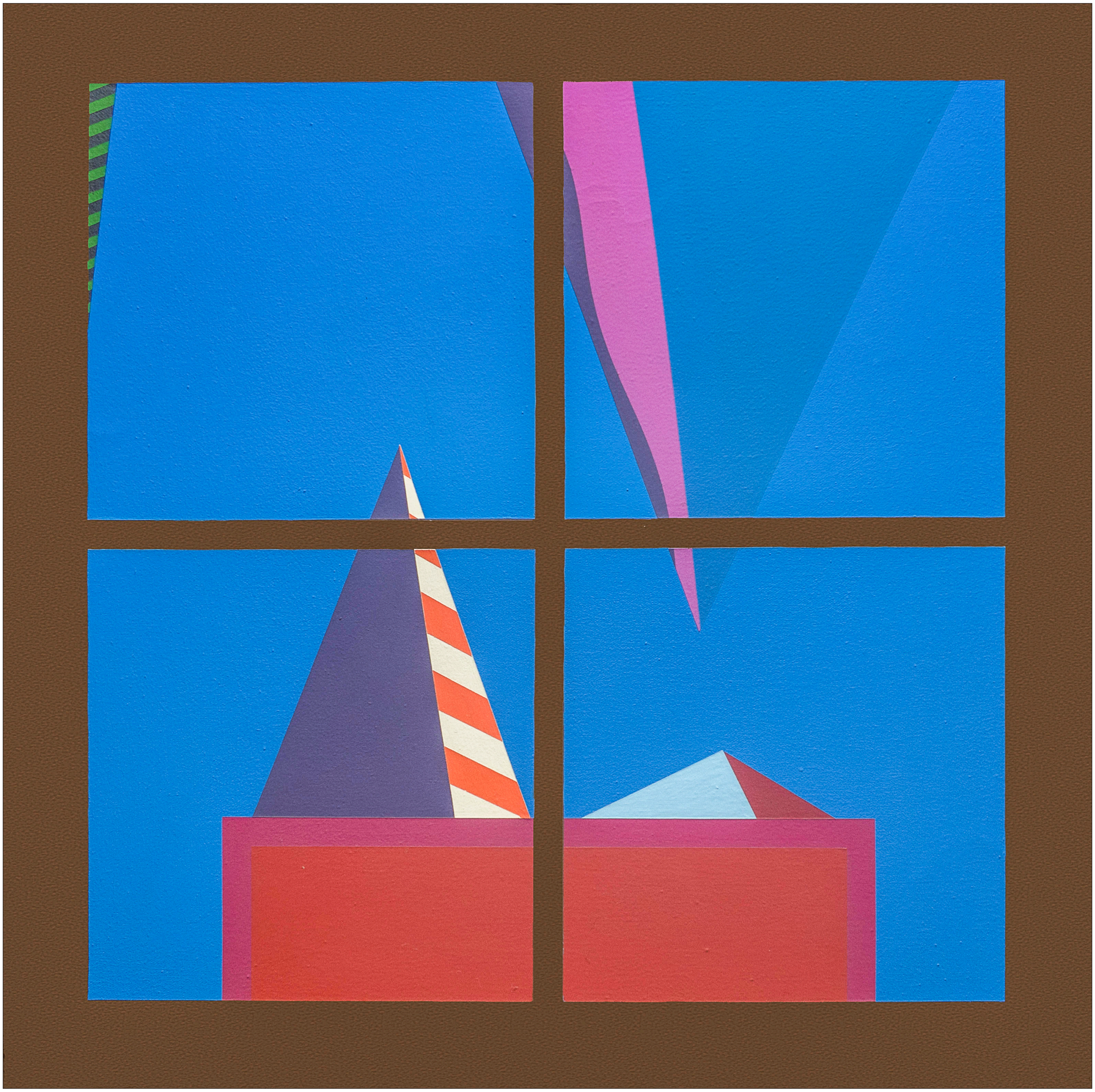
Window I, 1977. Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 20 in.
Collection of Todd ("T. J.") and Shanna Freeman.



Window, May 1977.
Acrylic on canvas, 24.75 x 24.75 in.
Collection of Haven and Simmy Pell.

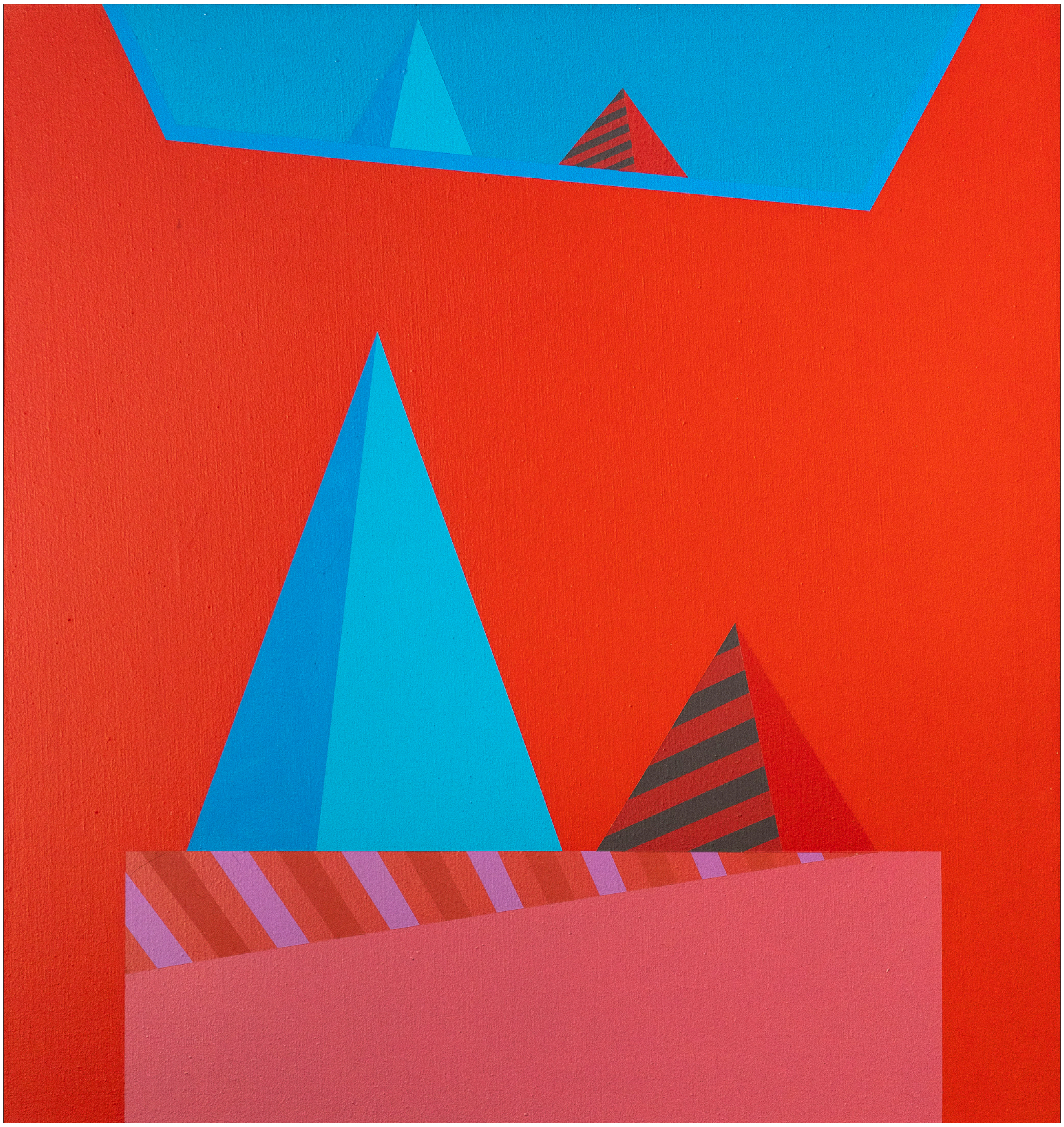


Untitled, 1978.
Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 36 in.
Collection of Ron Bishop.



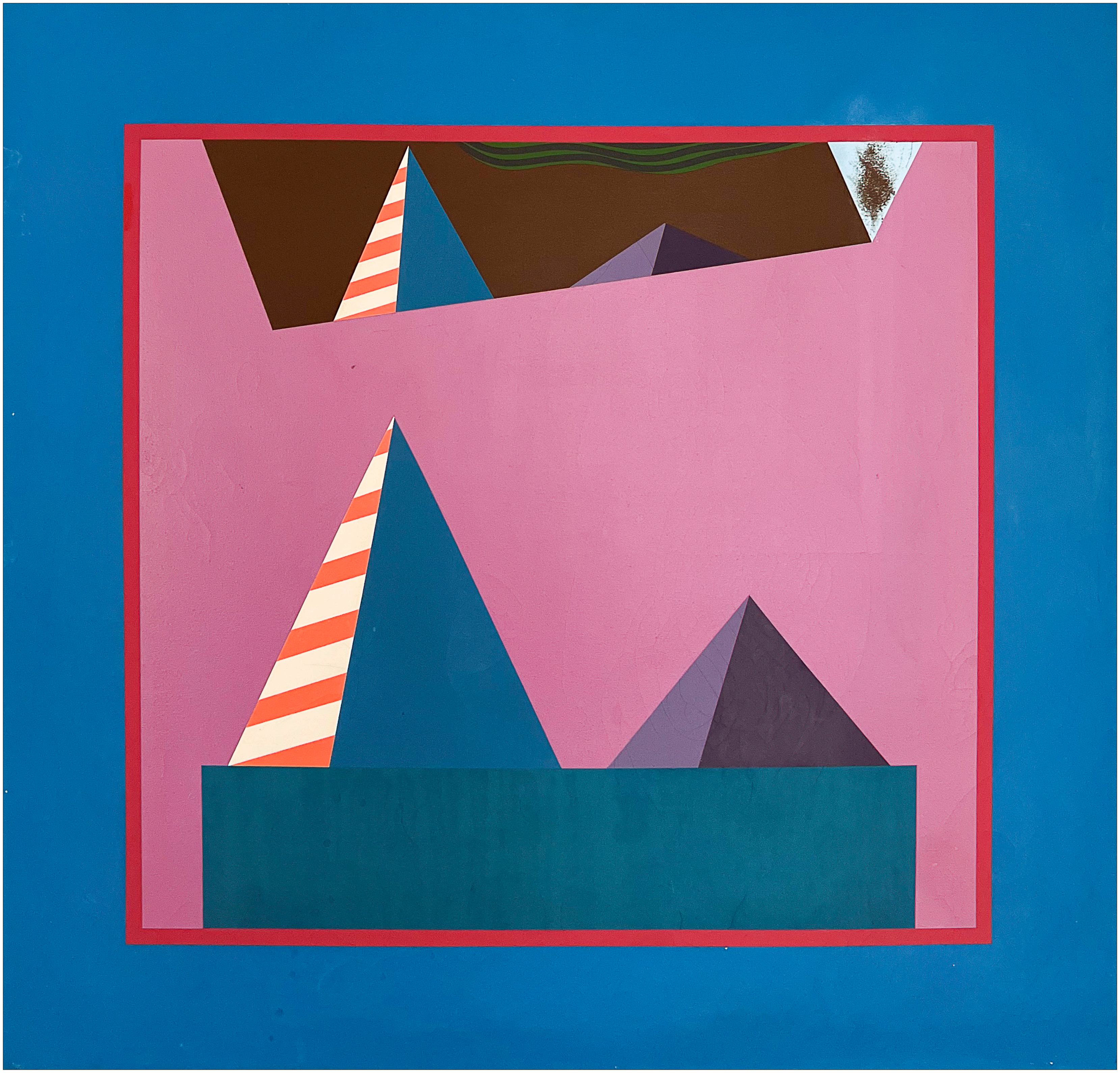
Untitled

1978. Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 in.
Collection of John Derry.



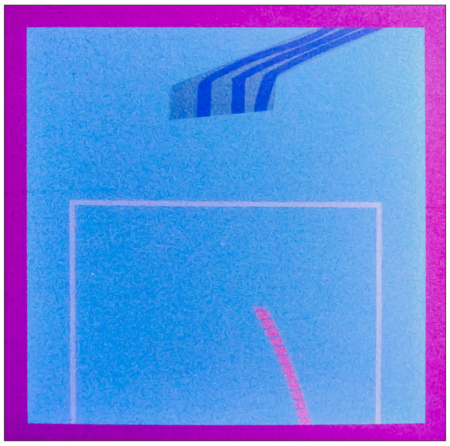
Still Life

1979. Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 34 in.
Collection of Todd ("T. J.") and Shanna Freeman.



Untitled

1978. Acrylic on canvas, 42 x 44 in.
Collection of Haven and Simmy Pell.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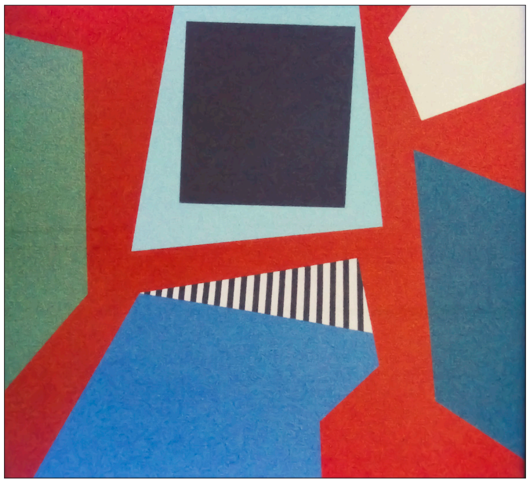
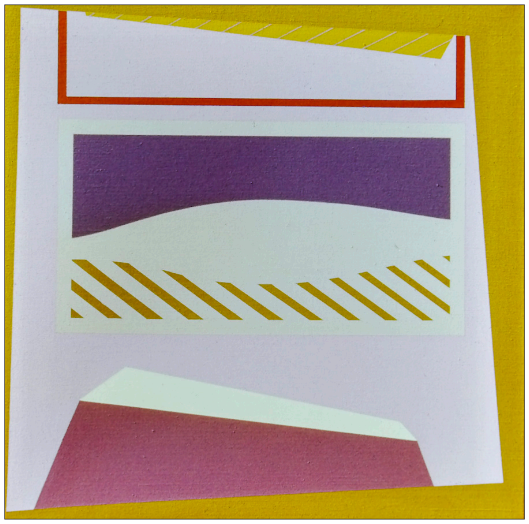
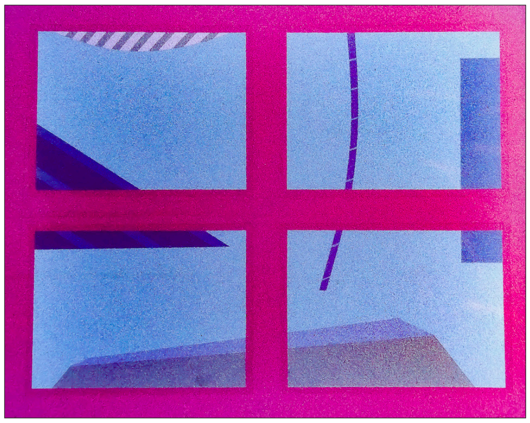
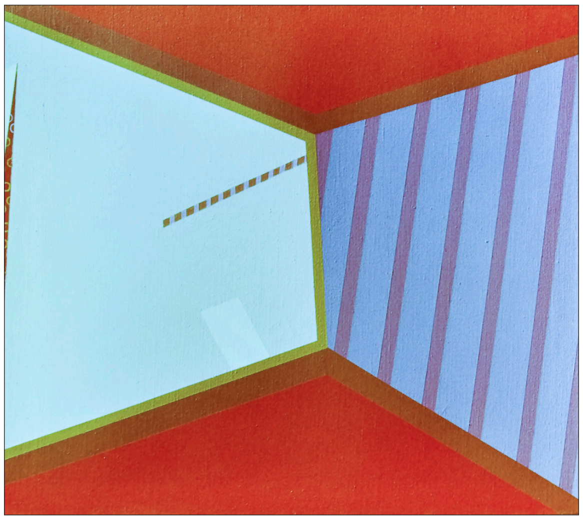
Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 in.


Untitled, 1977. Acrylic on canvas.


Three, 1976.
Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 28 in.


Untitled, 1977. Acrylic on canvas.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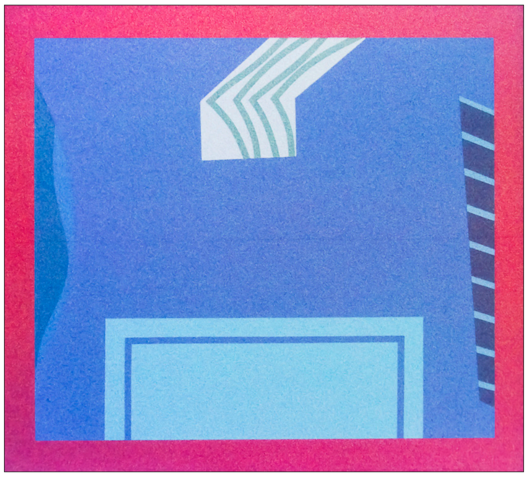
Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 32 in.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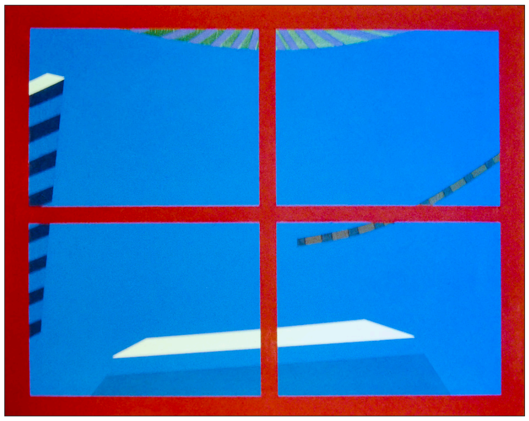
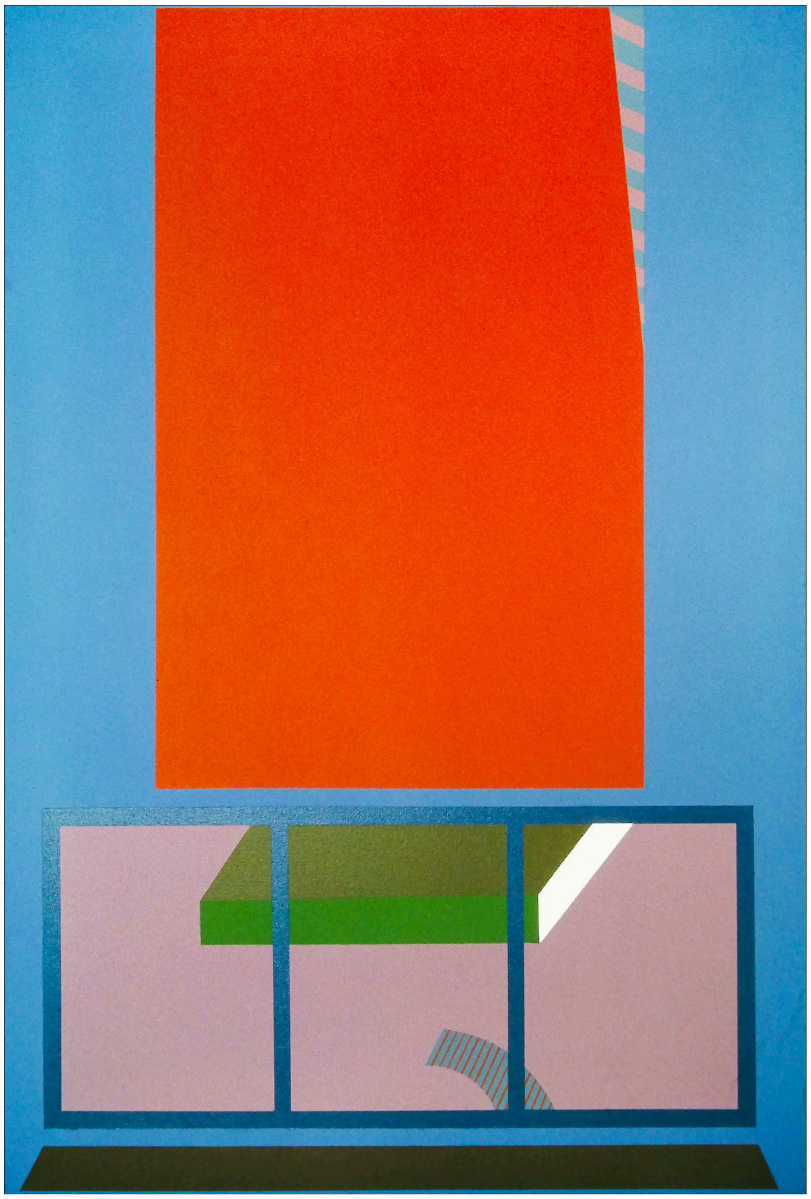
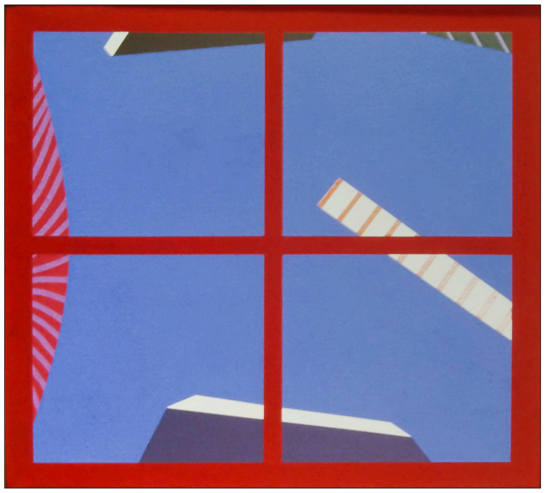


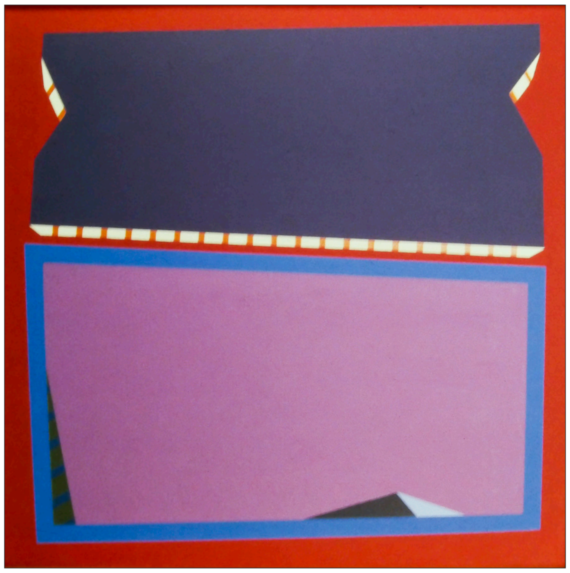
Untitled, 1978.
Acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 in.



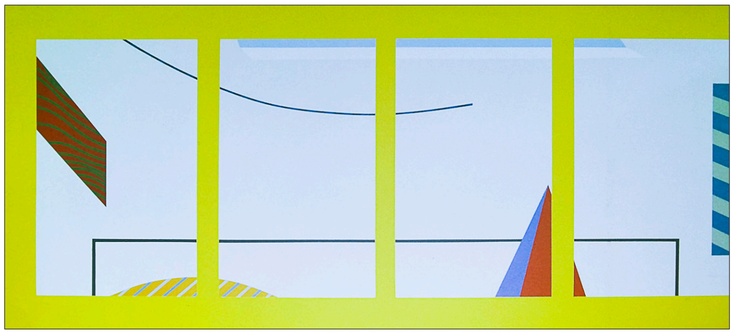
Untitled, 1977.
Acrylic on canvas, 55 x 38 in.



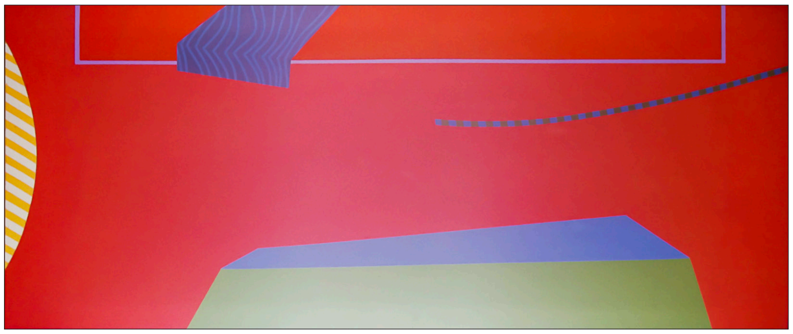
Untitled, 1978.
Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 22 in.



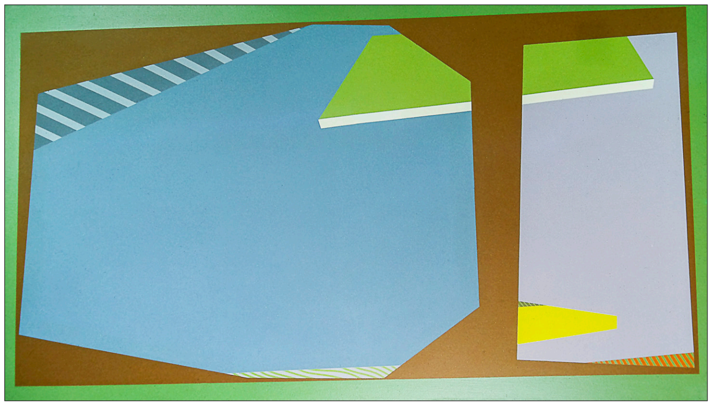
Untitled, 1978.
Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 in.



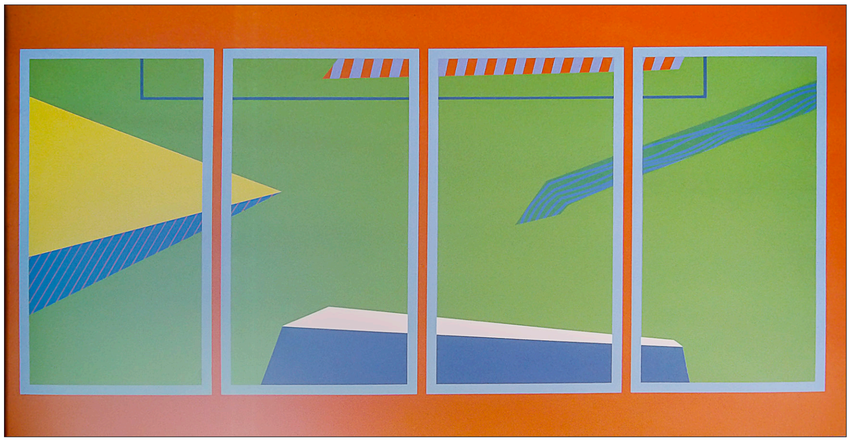
Windows, 1976.
Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 83 in. (Slide damaged)



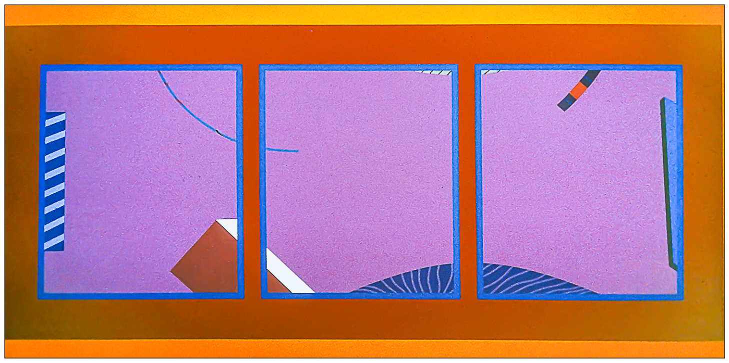
Untitled, 1976.
Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 74 in. Collection of Kutak Rock.



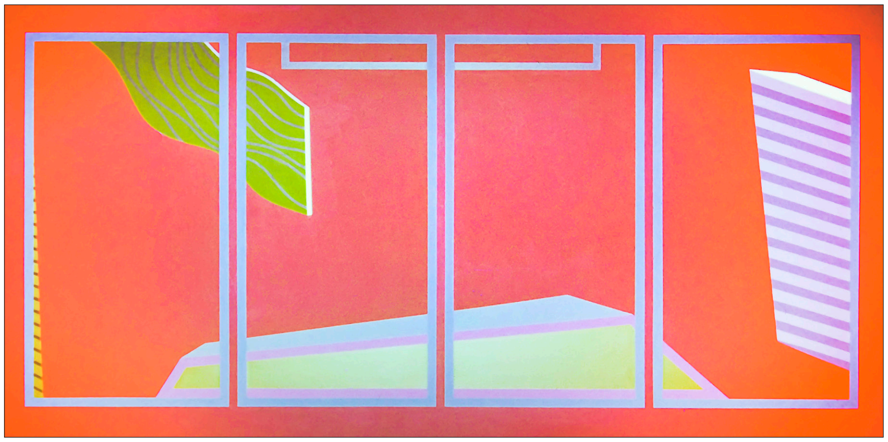
Untitled, 1976. Acrylic on canvas, 44 x 79 in.



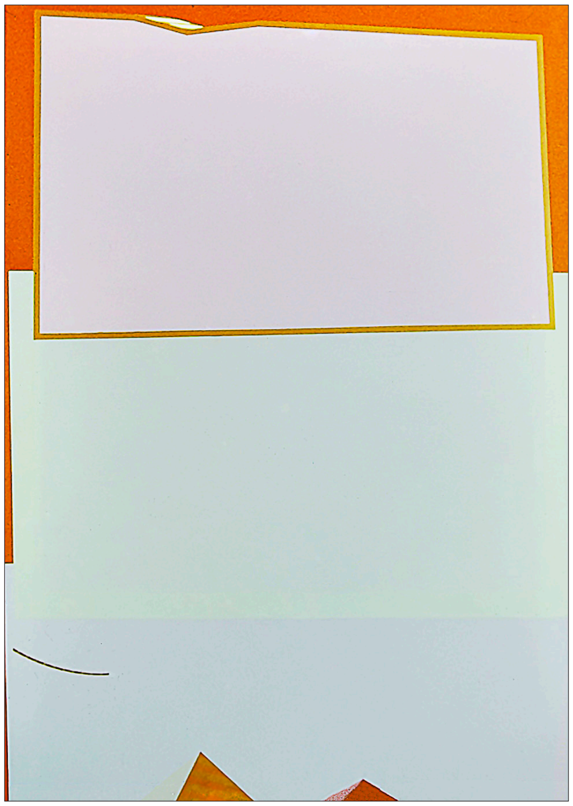
Untitled, 1976. Acrylic on canvas, 47 x 96 in. (Slide damaged)



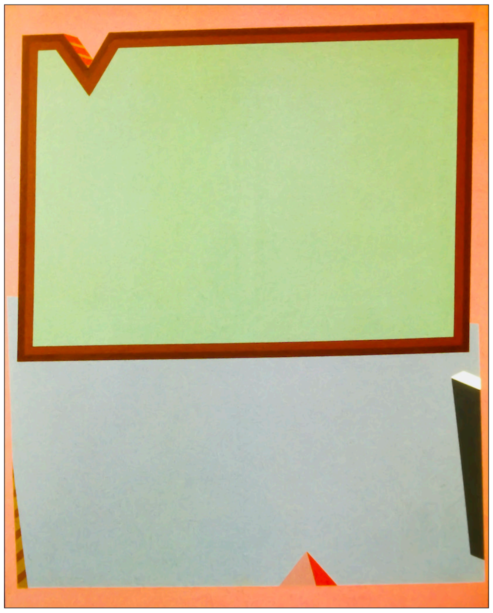
Untitled, 1979.
Acrylic on canvas. Collection of Kutak Rock.



Untitled, 1977. Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 80 in.

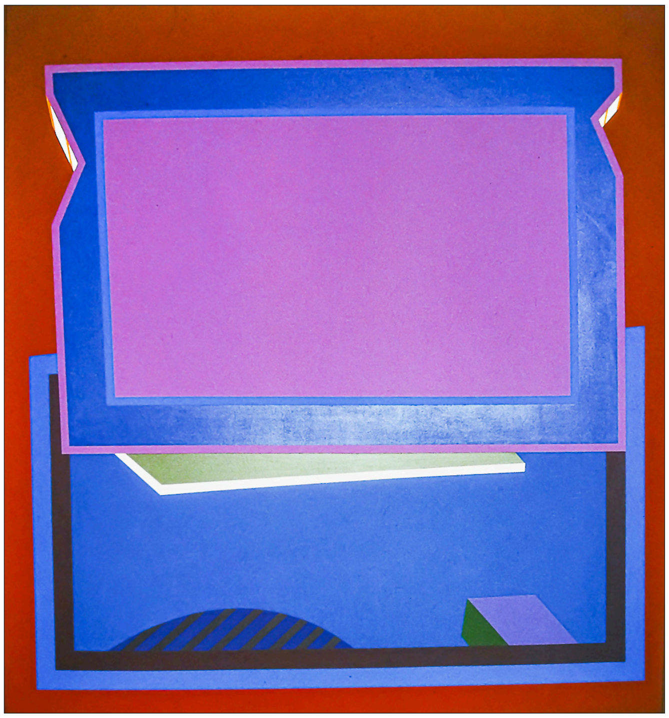


Untitled, 1979. Acrylic on canvas, 93 x 64 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

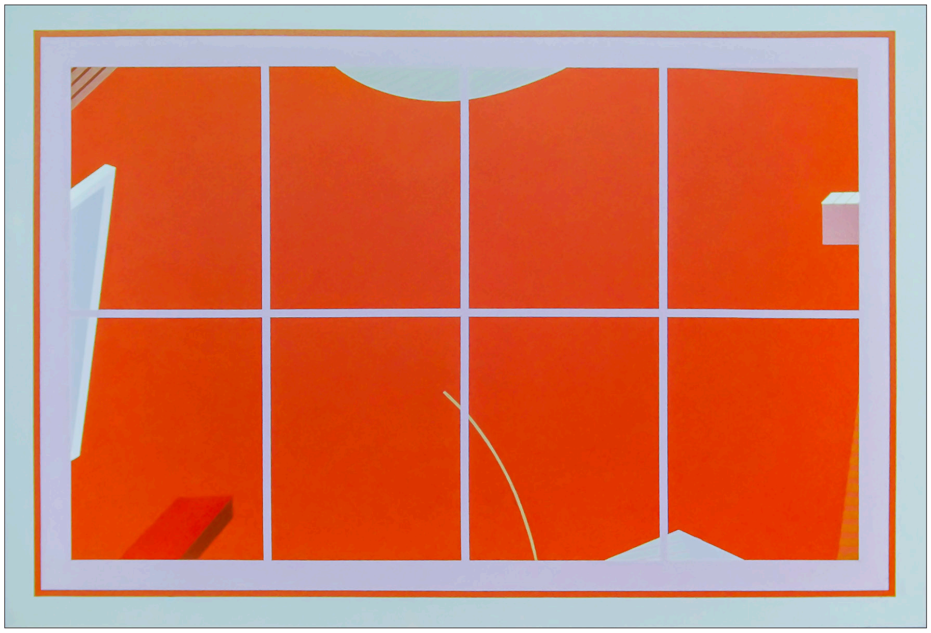


Untitled (original), 1978–81.
Acrylic on canvas, 69 x 55 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

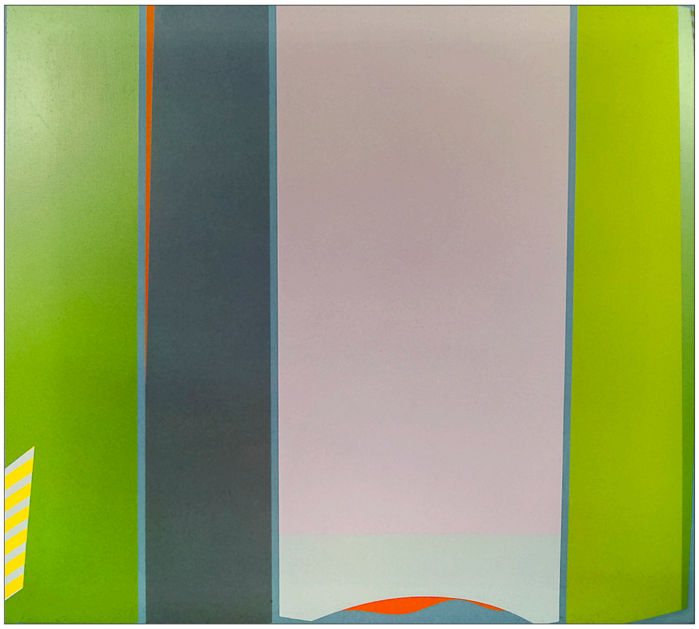
Untitled (repainted), 1978–81.
Acrylic on canvas, 69 x 55 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



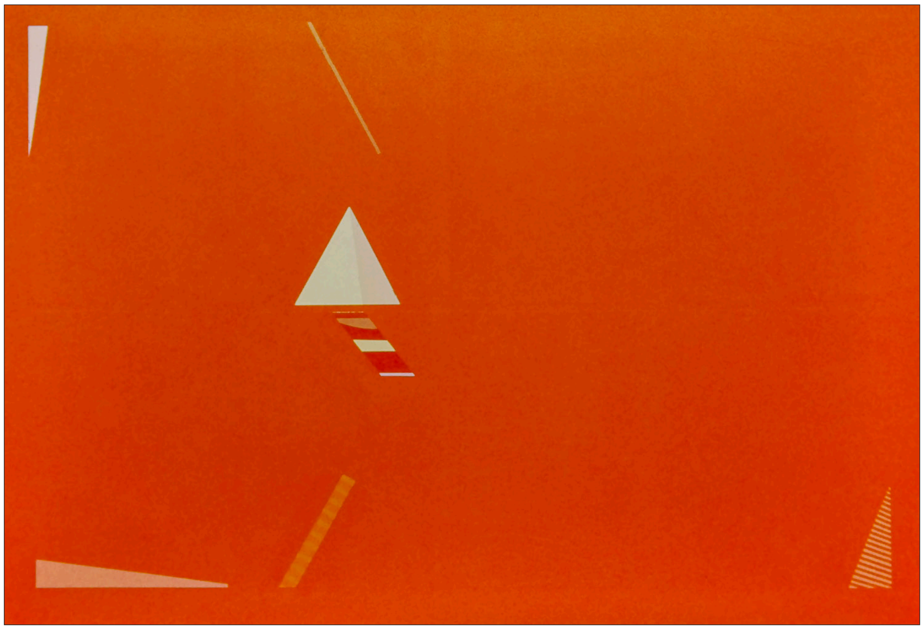
Untitled, 1979. Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 68 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



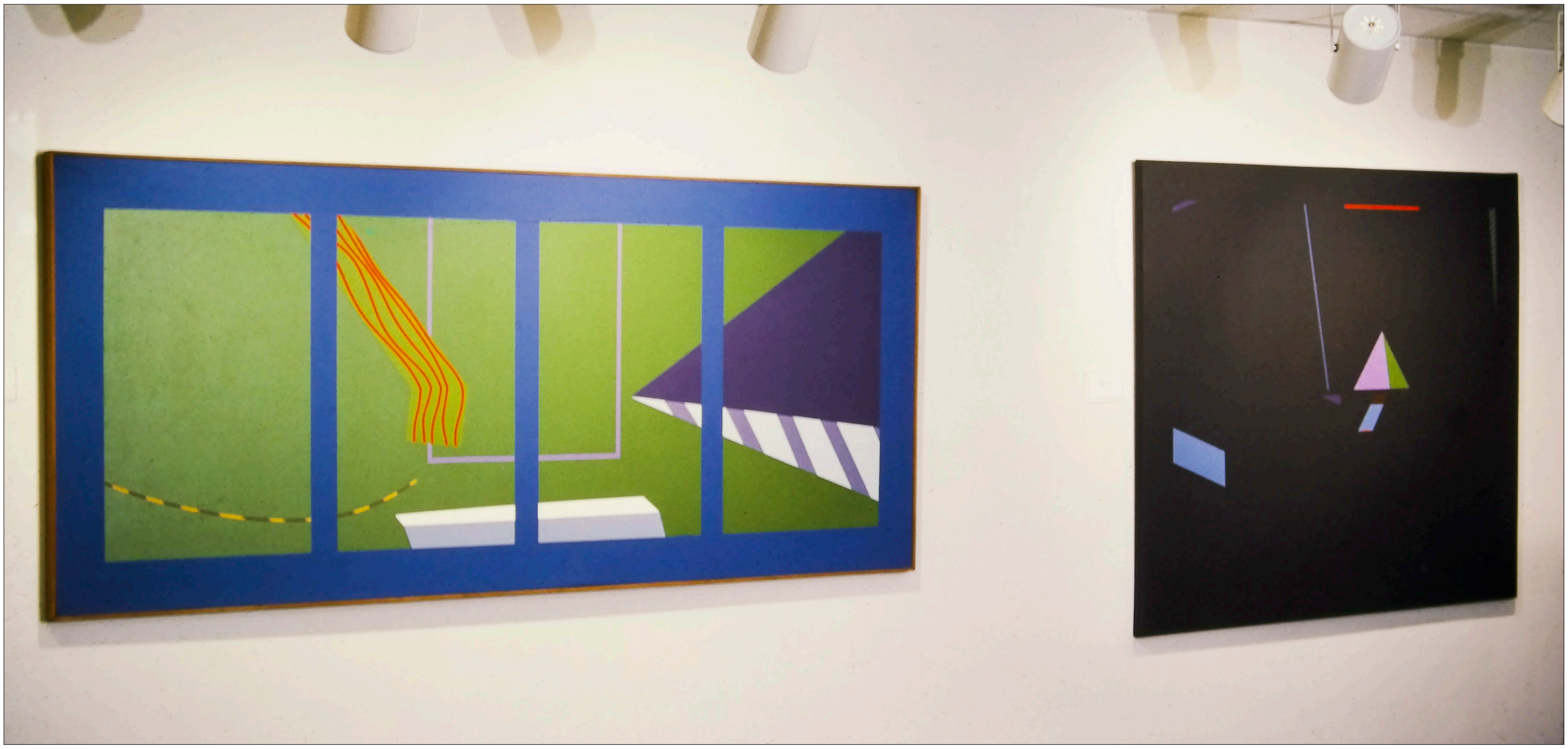
Window Series, 1979. Acrylic on canvas, 64 x 93 in.



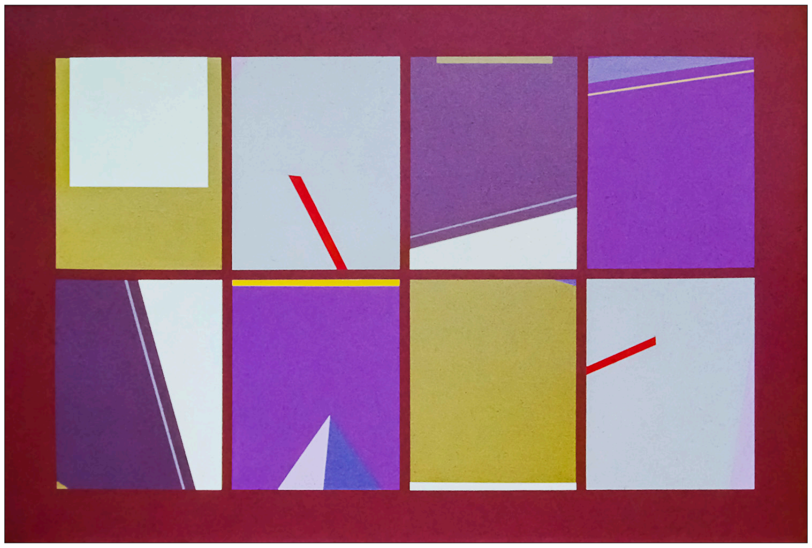
Untitled, 1976. Acrylic on canvas, 64 x 70 in.



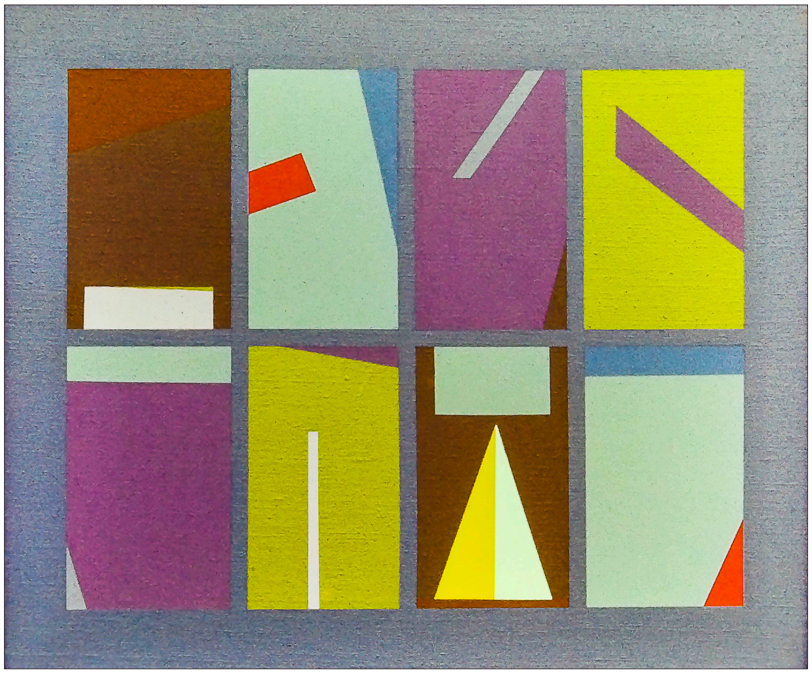
Untitled, 1979. Acrylic on canvas, 64 x 93 in.



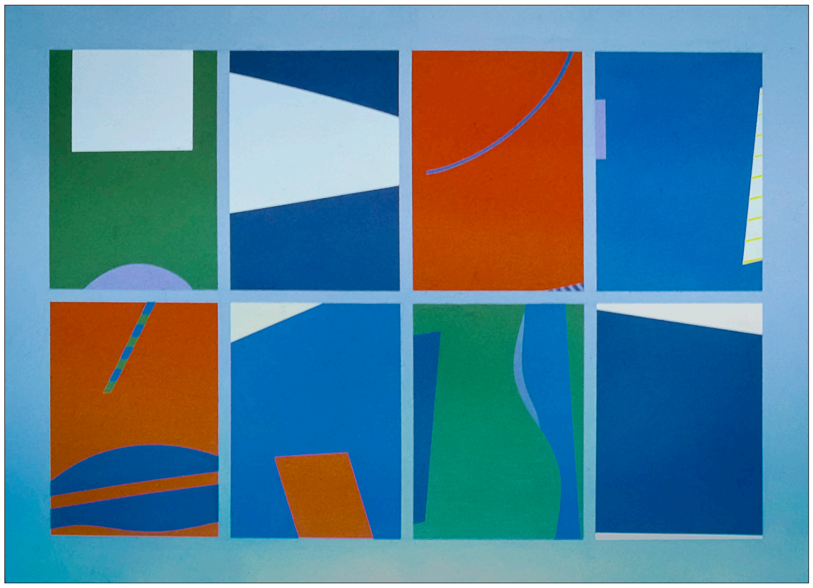
Left: *Marathas*, 1977, 36 x 83 in.; Right: *Regardez Encore Une Fois*, 1977; Collection of Kutak Rock.



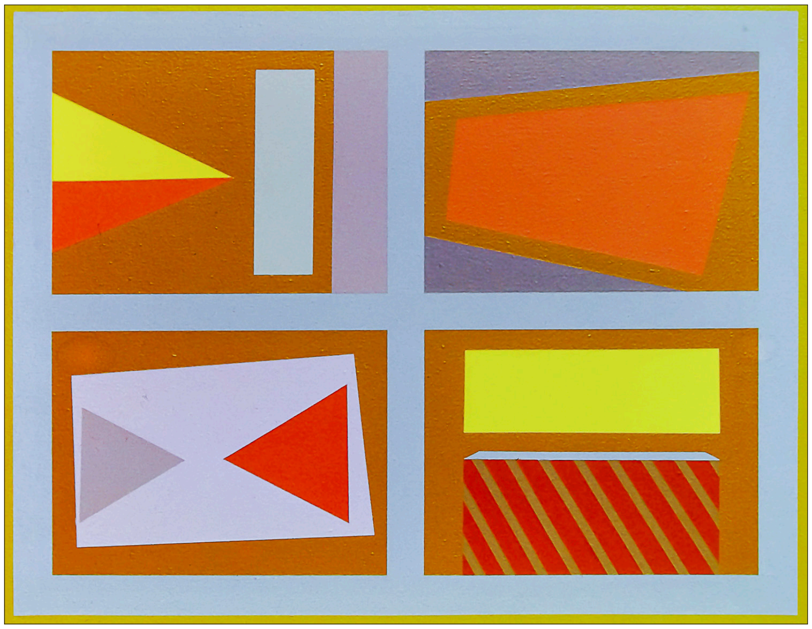
Sampler, 1976. Acrylic on canvas. Collection of Kutak Rock.



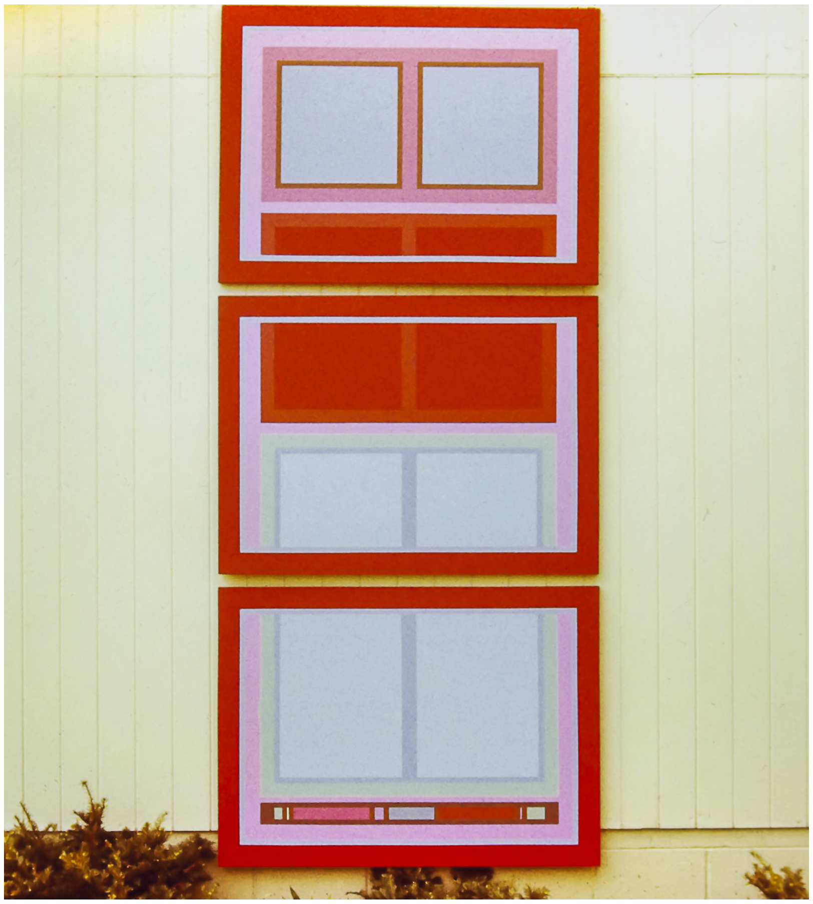
Untitled, 1976. Acrylic on canvas.



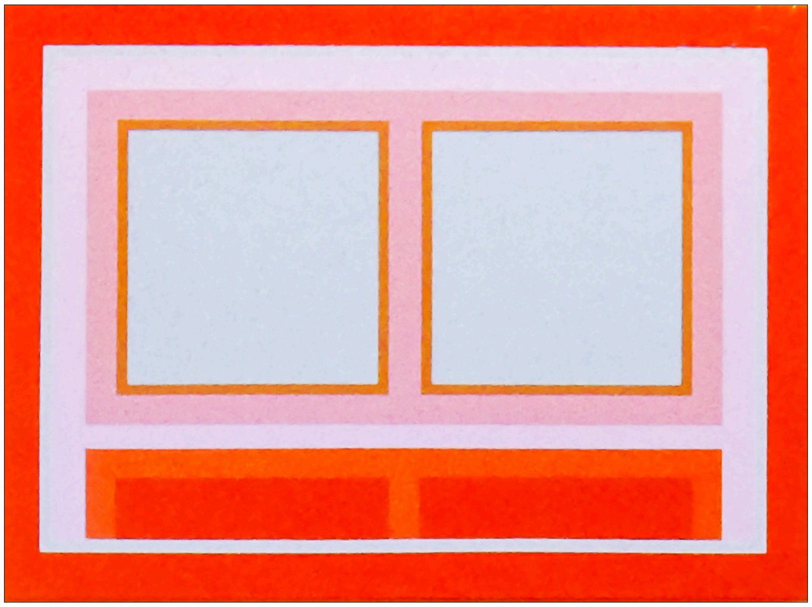
Eight in One, 1976. Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

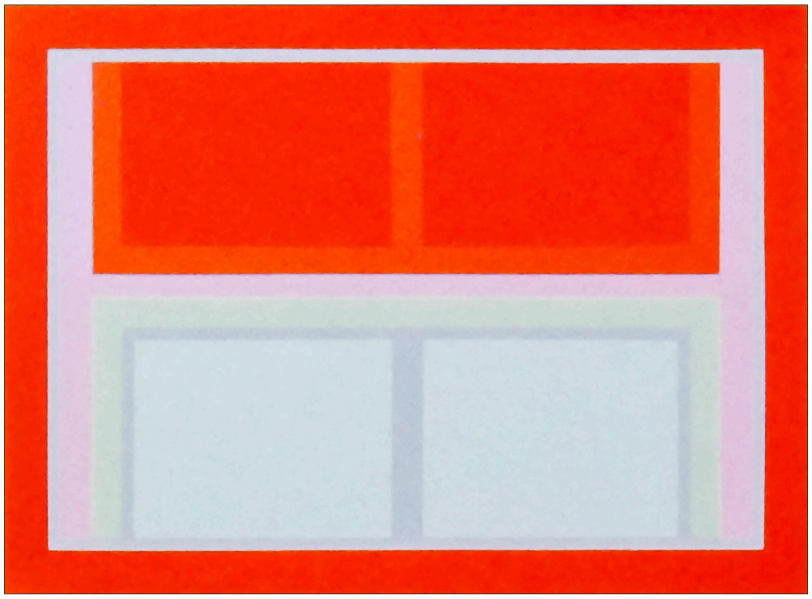


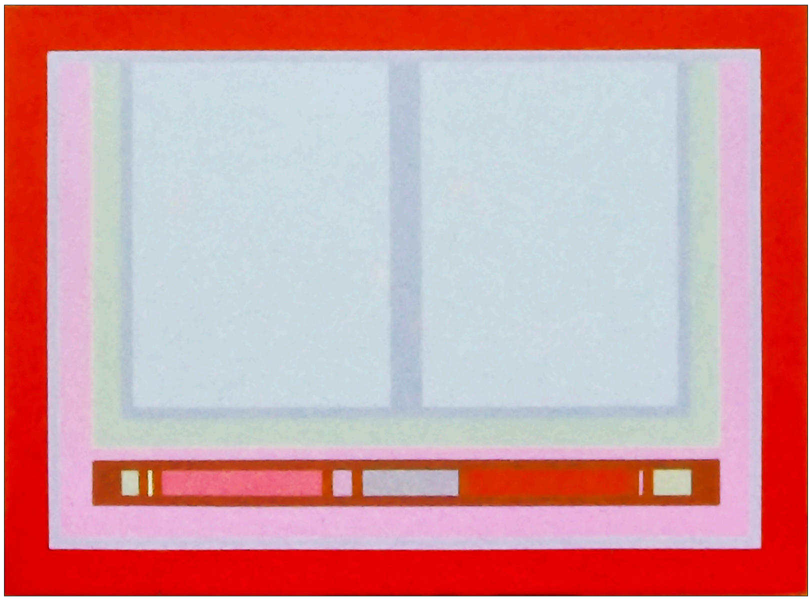
Untitled, 1977. Acrylic on canvas.

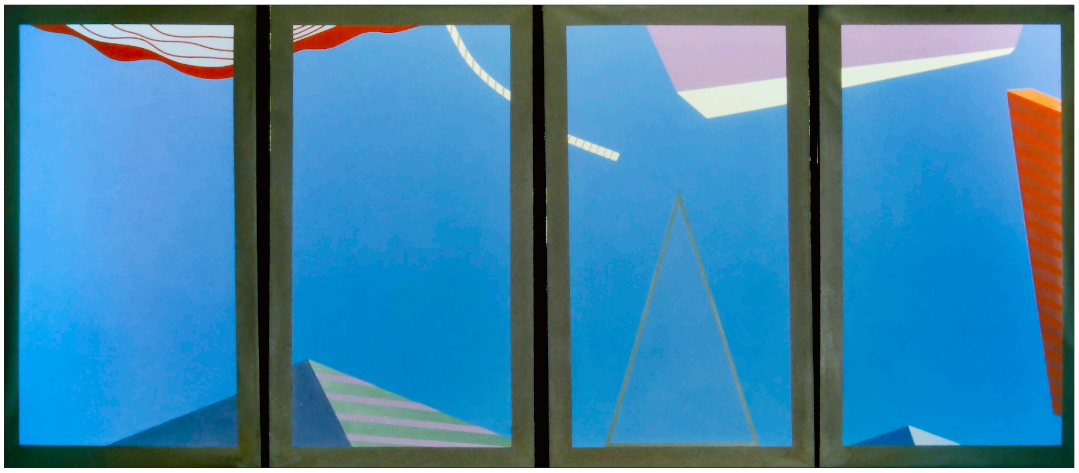


Untitled (three panels), 1979. Acrylic on canvas.

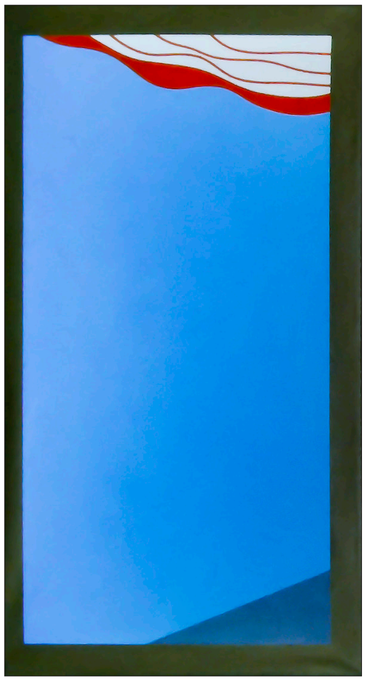


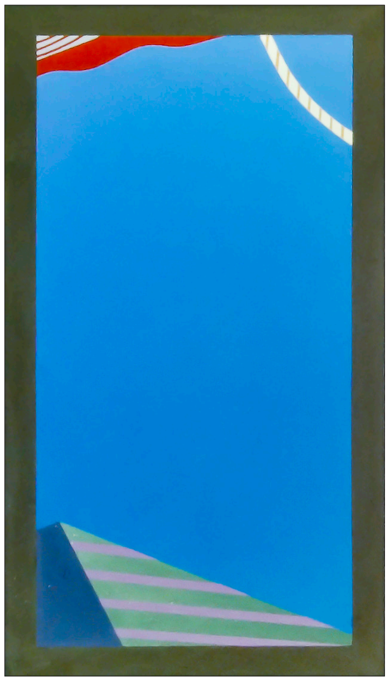


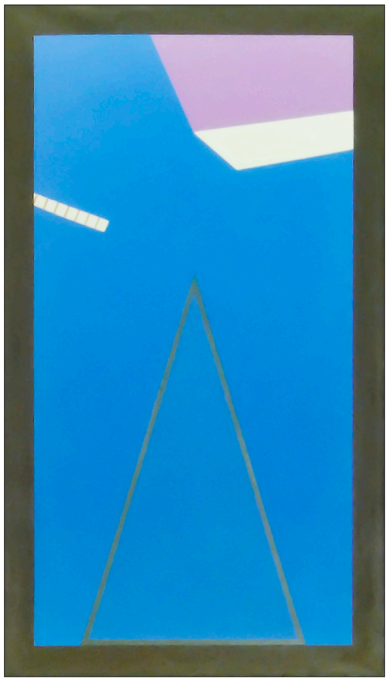


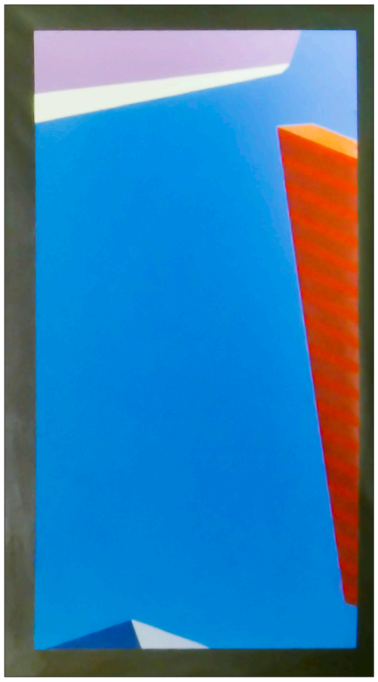


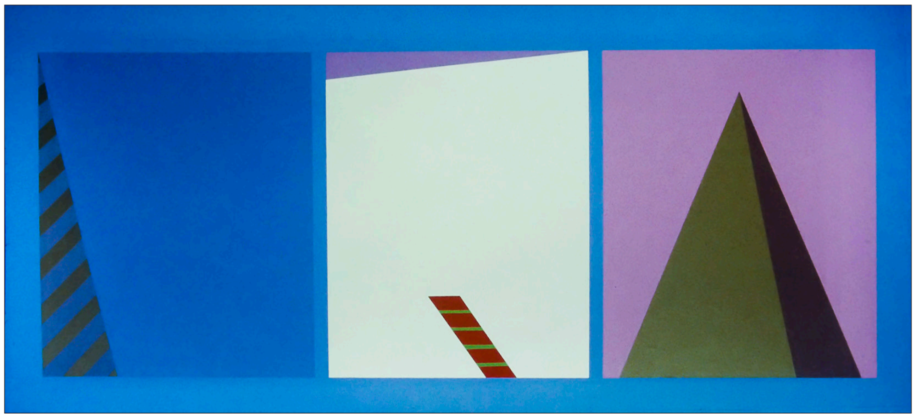
Four-Part Work, 1978. Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 136 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.







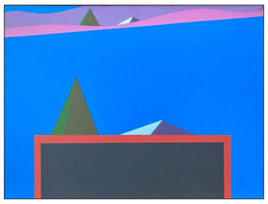




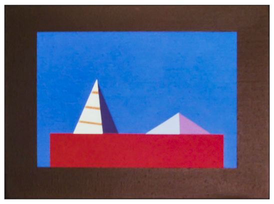
Three, 1978. Acrylic on canvas, 22 x 48 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

Pyramids: 1976 to 1980

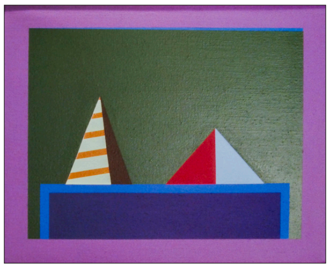
As mentioned, pyramids dominated my father's production in the late 1970s. Pages 276 to 283 order pyramid paintings by height to show how he used the form to establish moods both intimate (as still lifes) and monumental (e.g., *Khufu*). **Note:** Paintings featured earlier in this chapter are captioned **in bold**.



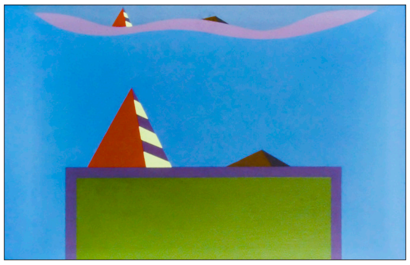
12 x 16 in. (1978)



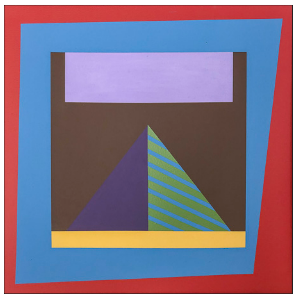
12 x 16 in. (1978)



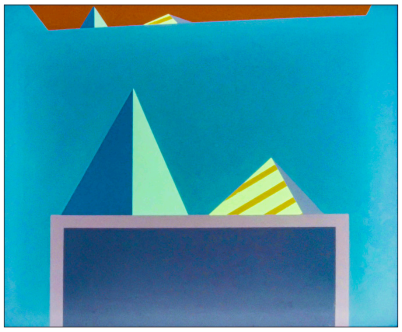
16 x 20 in. (1978)



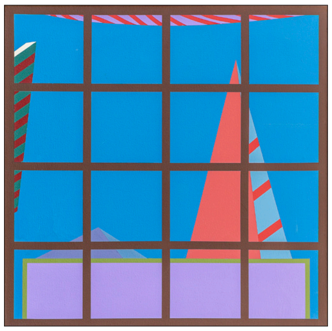
16 x 25 in. (1979)



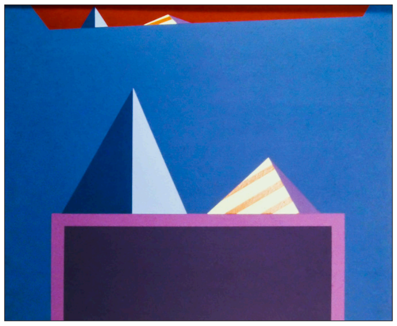
18 x 18 in. (1977)



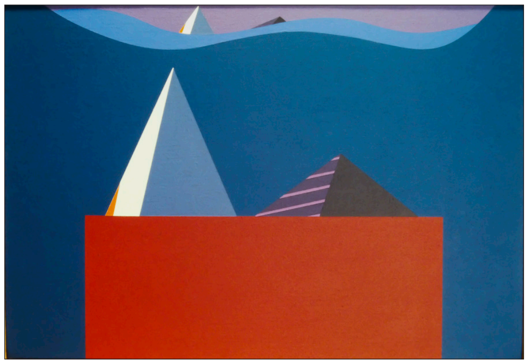
19.5 x 22 in. (1979)



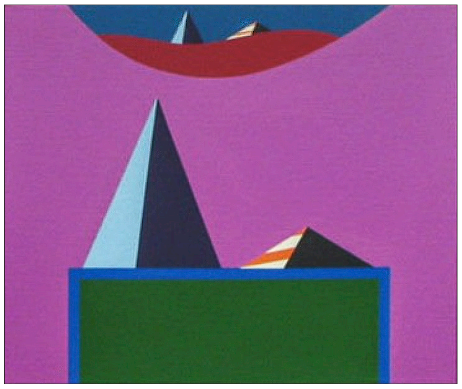
20 x 20 in. (1977)



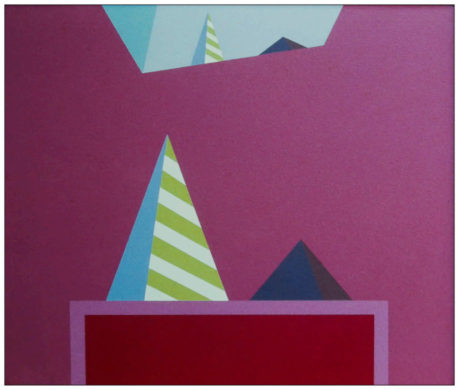
20 x 24 in. (1978)



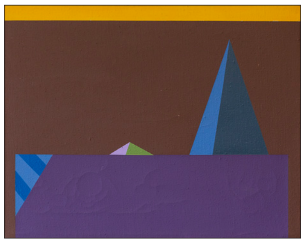
22 x 32 in. (1978)

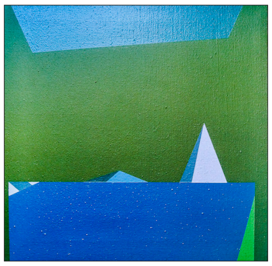


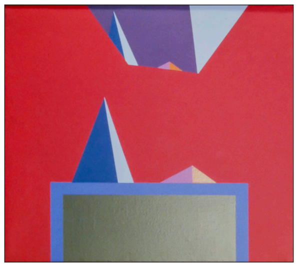
23.25 x 28 in. (1978)

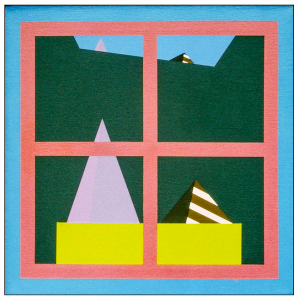


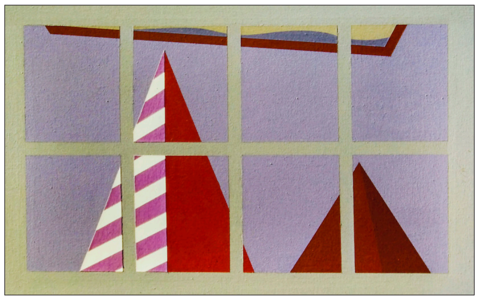
23.25 x 28 in. (1978)

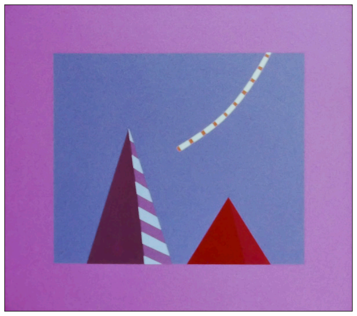

14.5 x 18.5 in. (1976)

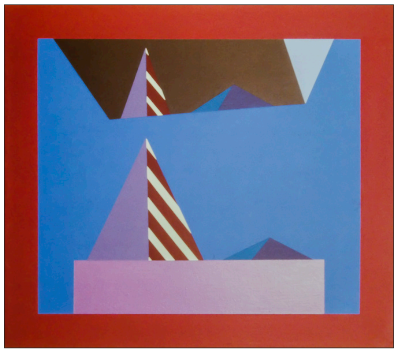

16 x 16 in. (1976)

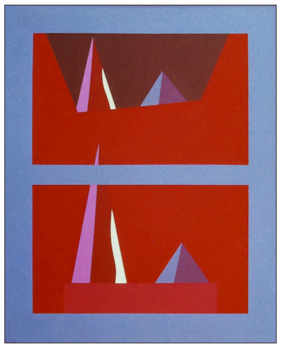

16 x 18 in. (1978)

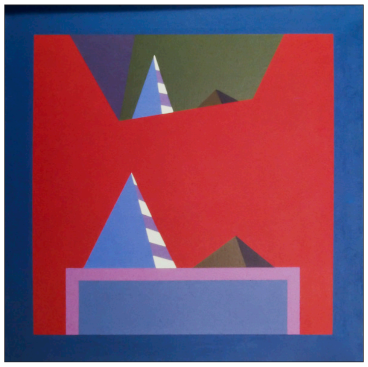

18 x 18 in. (1980)

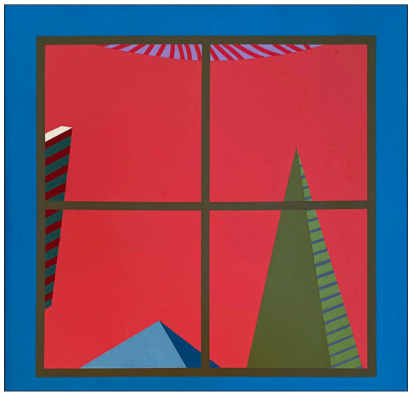

18 x 28 in. (1979)

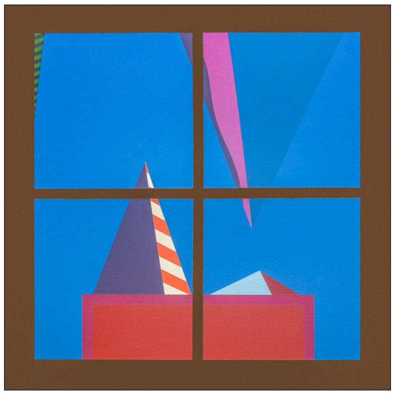

19 x 21 in. (1979)

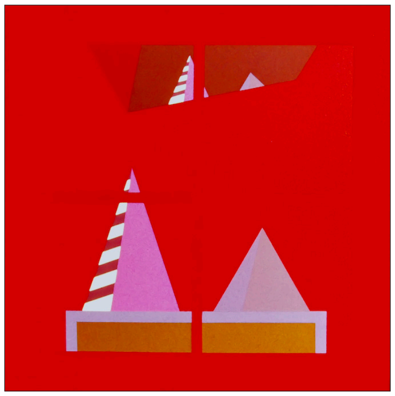

20 x 22 in. (1978)

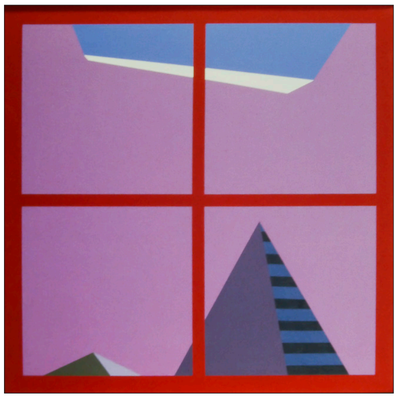

21 x 18 in. (1978)


22 x 22 in. (1978)

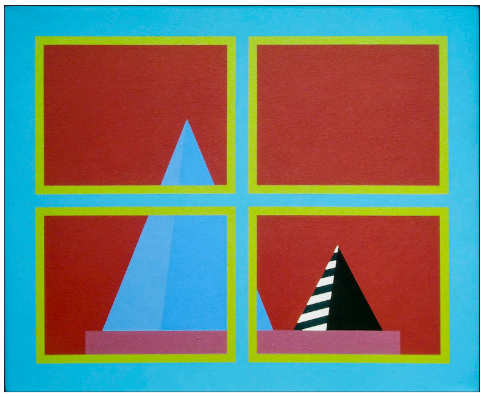

24 x 24 in. (1977)


24 x 24 in. (1978)

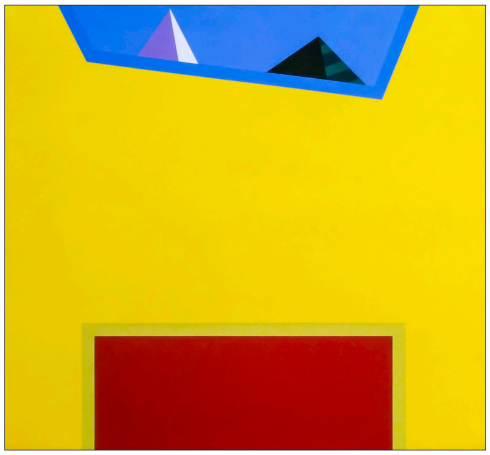

24 x 24 in. (1978)



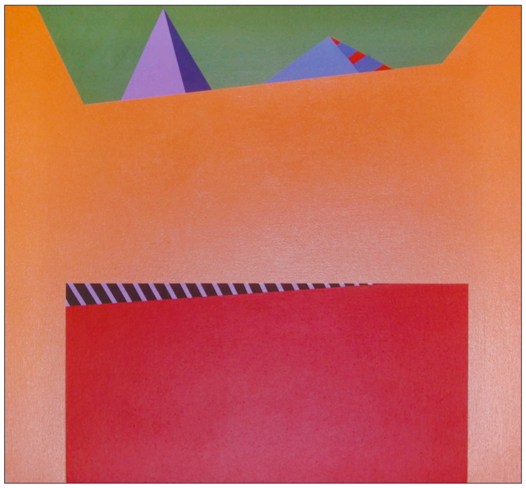
24 x 24 in. (1978)



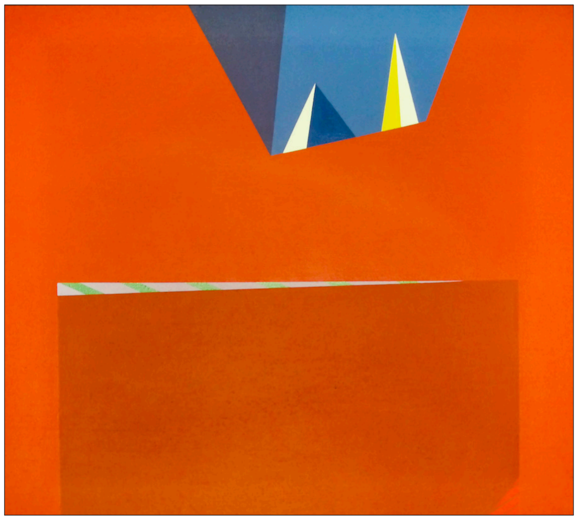
24 x 29 in. (1980)



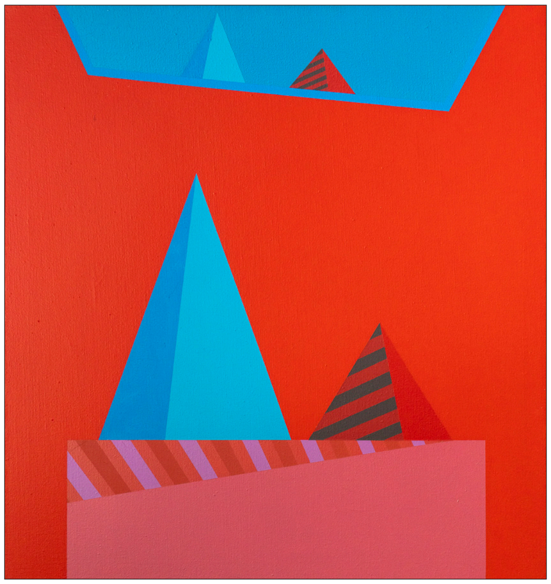
28 x 30 in. (1980)



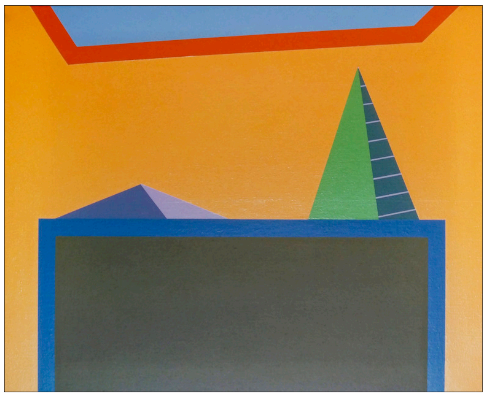
30 x 32 in. (1977)



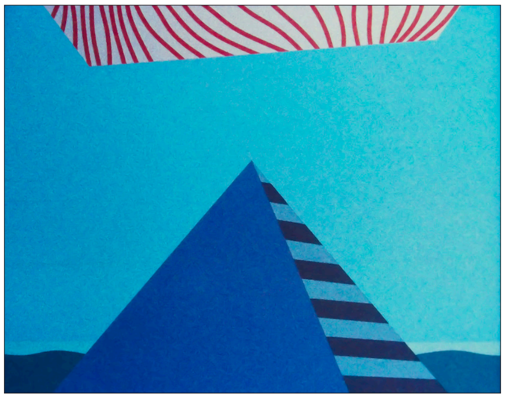
32 x 36 in. (1977)



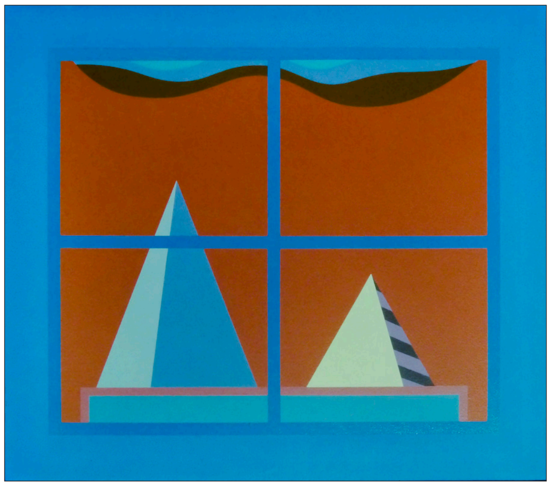
36 x 34 in. (1979)



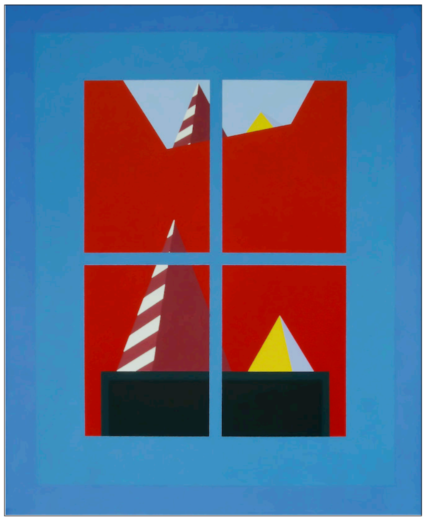
24 x 30 in. (1977)



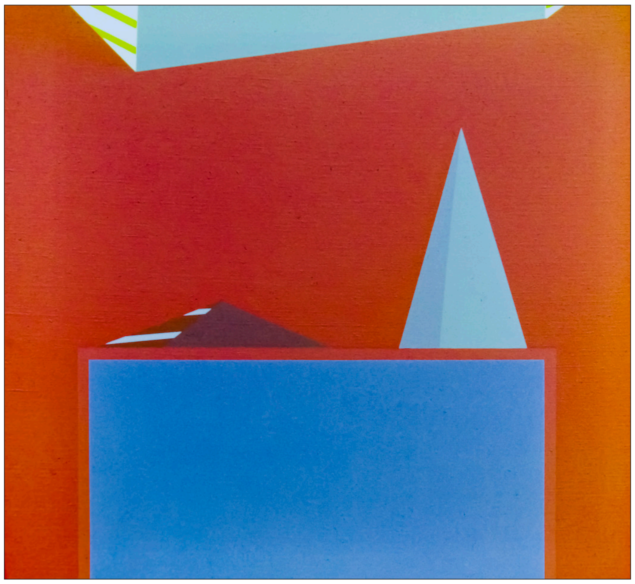
24 x 30 in. (1976)



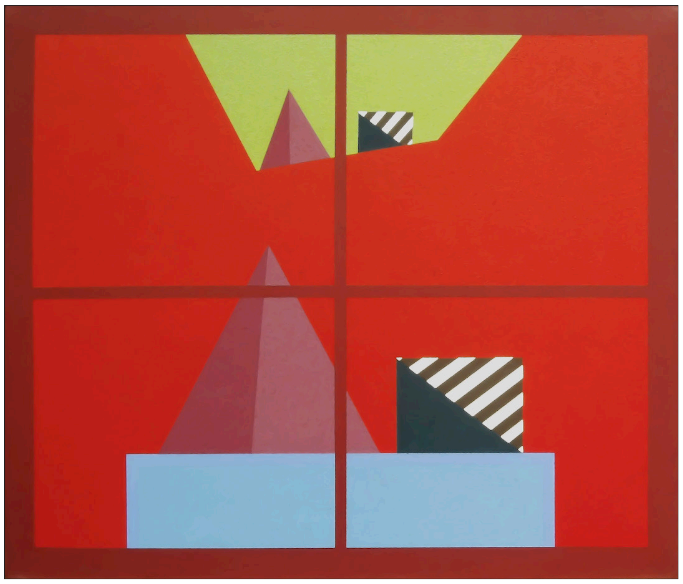
30 x 34 in. (1979)



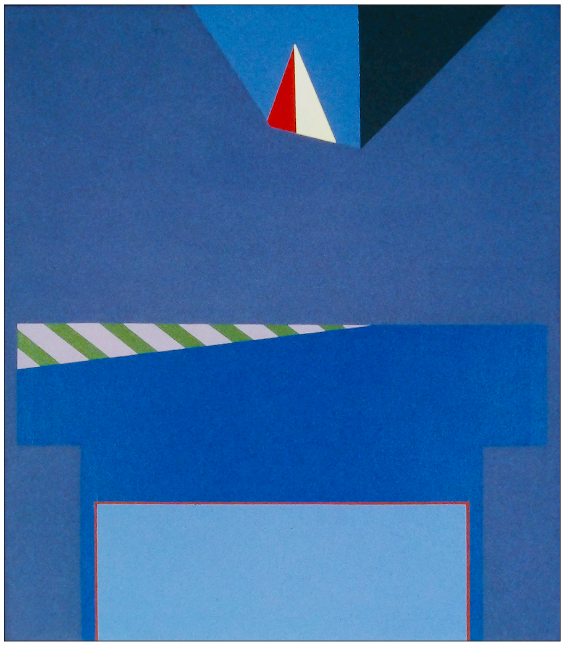
32 x 26 in. (1980)



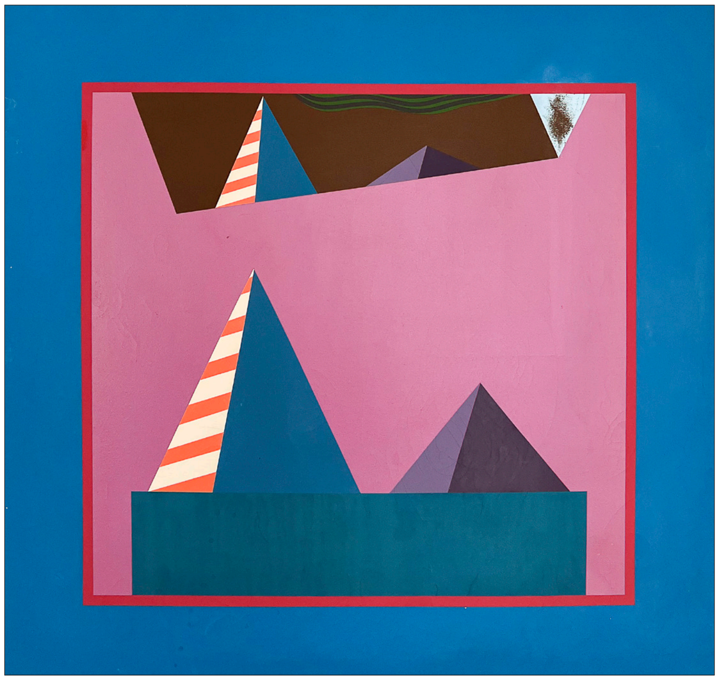
36 x 36 in. (1976)



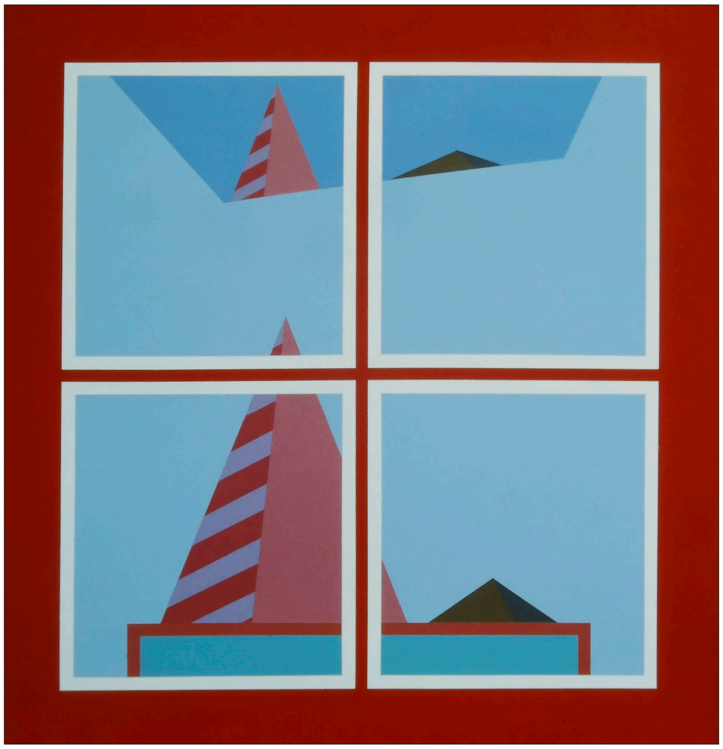
36 x 43 in. (1980)



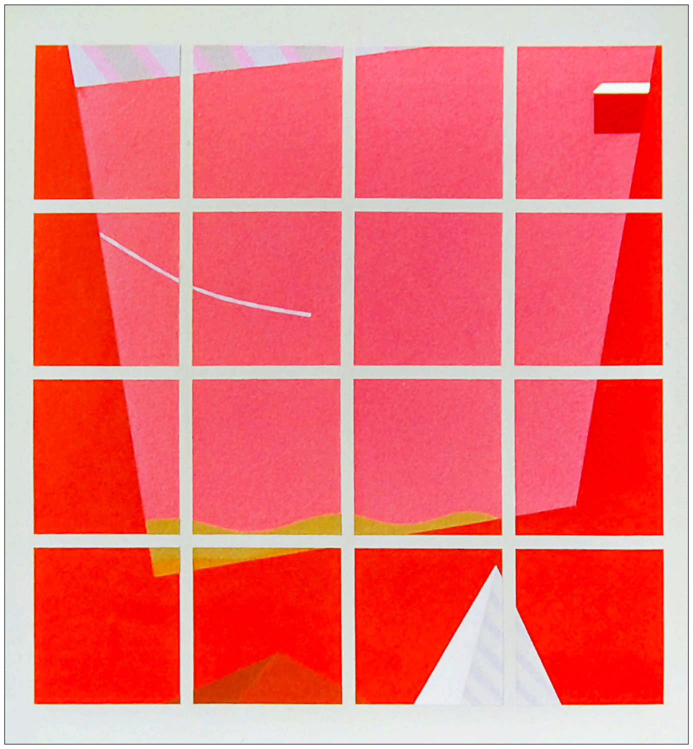
40 x 36 in. (1976)



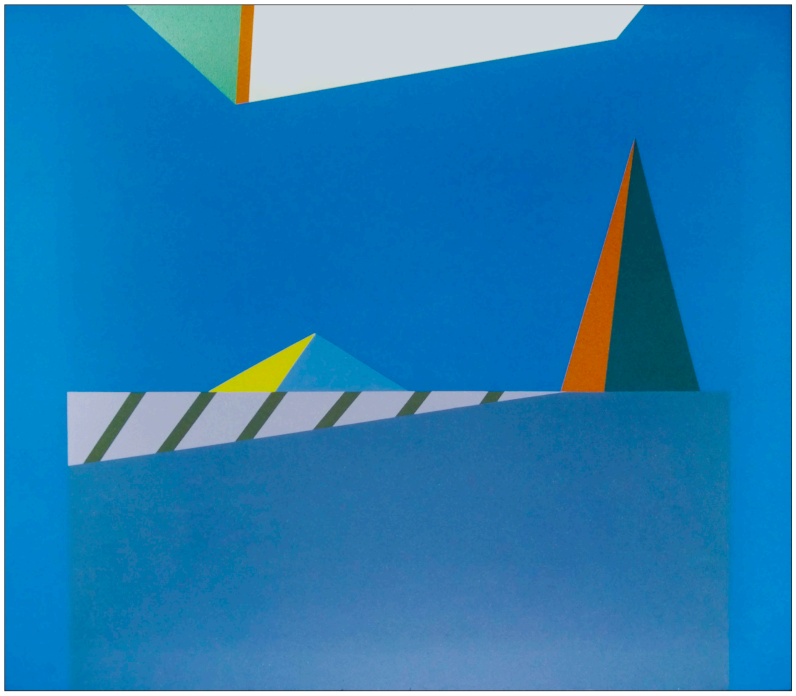
42 x 44 in. (1978)



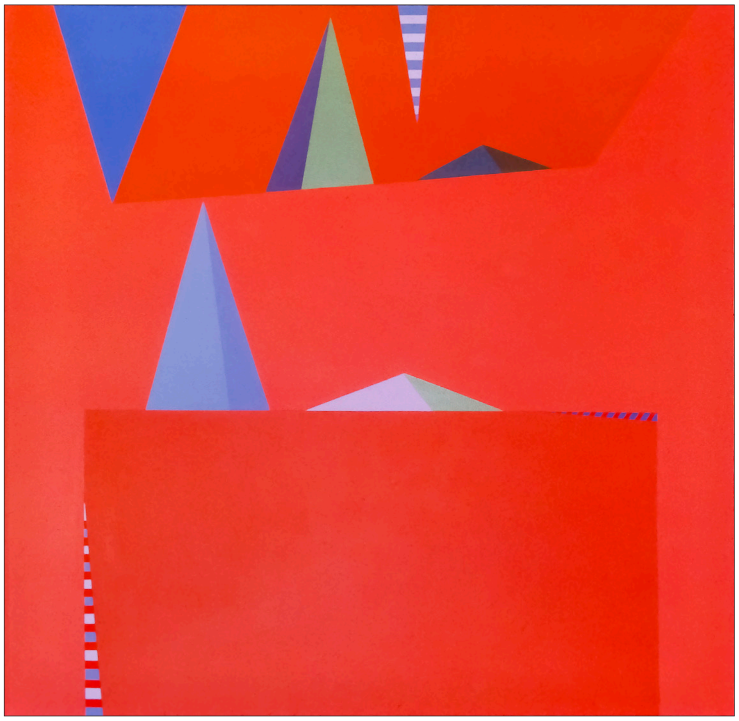
46 x 44 in. (1979)



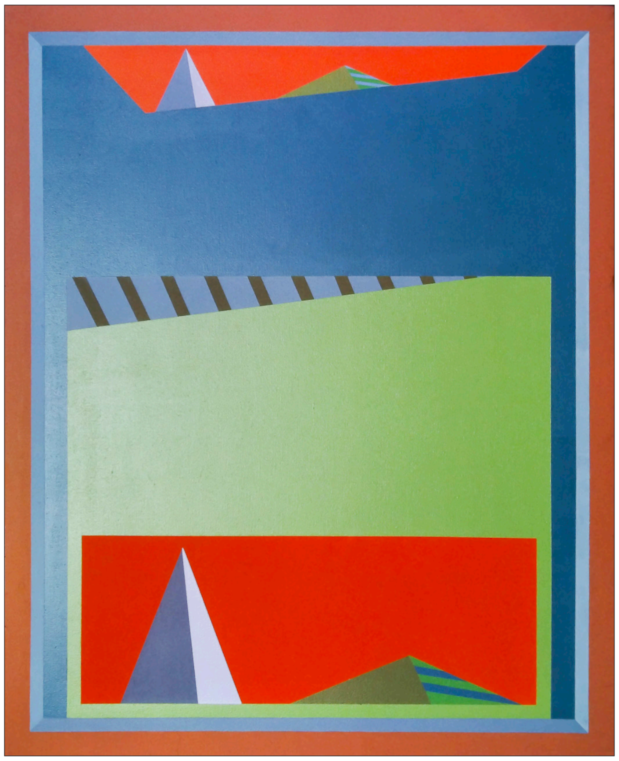
46 x 44 in. (1979)



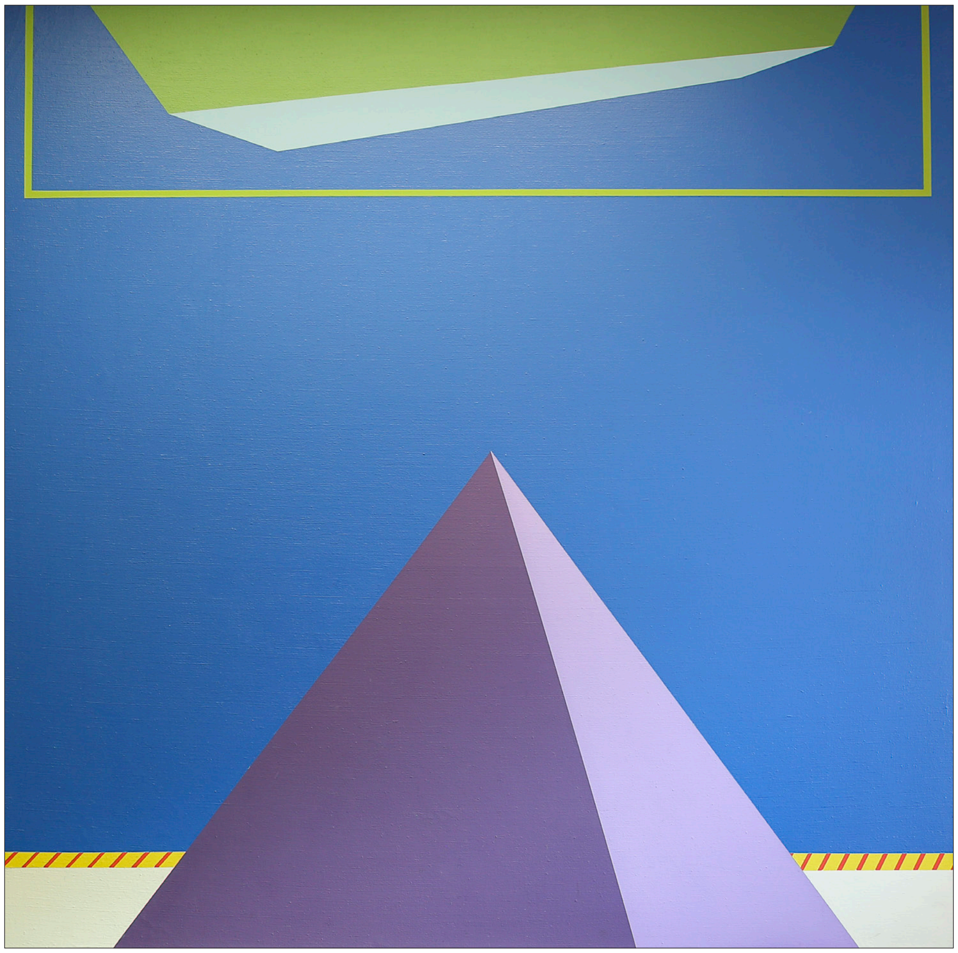
43 x 48 in. (1976)



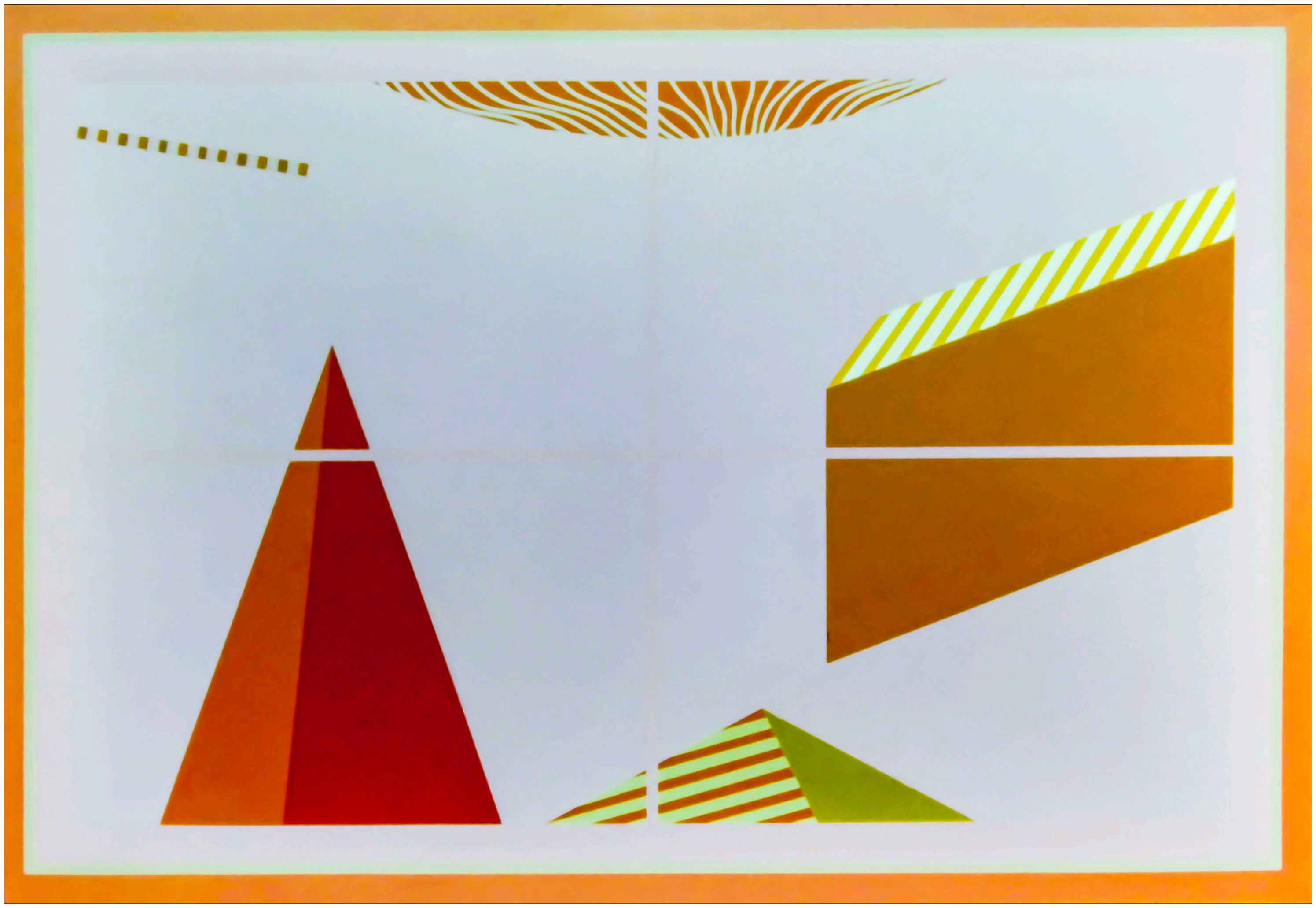
45 x 43 in. (1976)



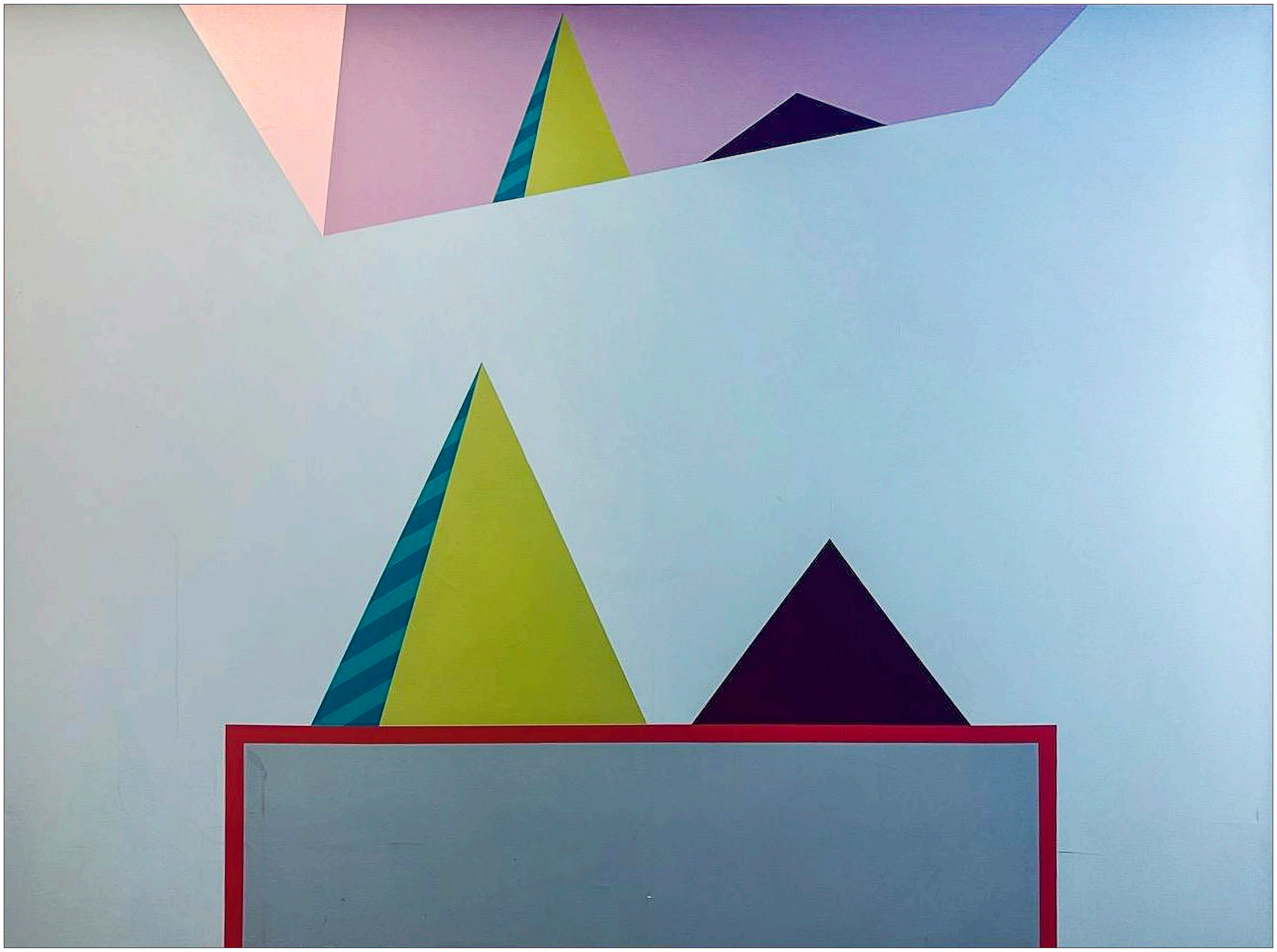
47 x 39 in. (1977)



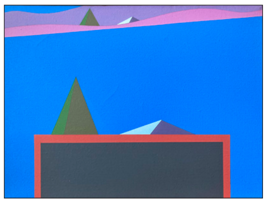
59 x 59 in. (1976)



64 x 93 in. (1979)



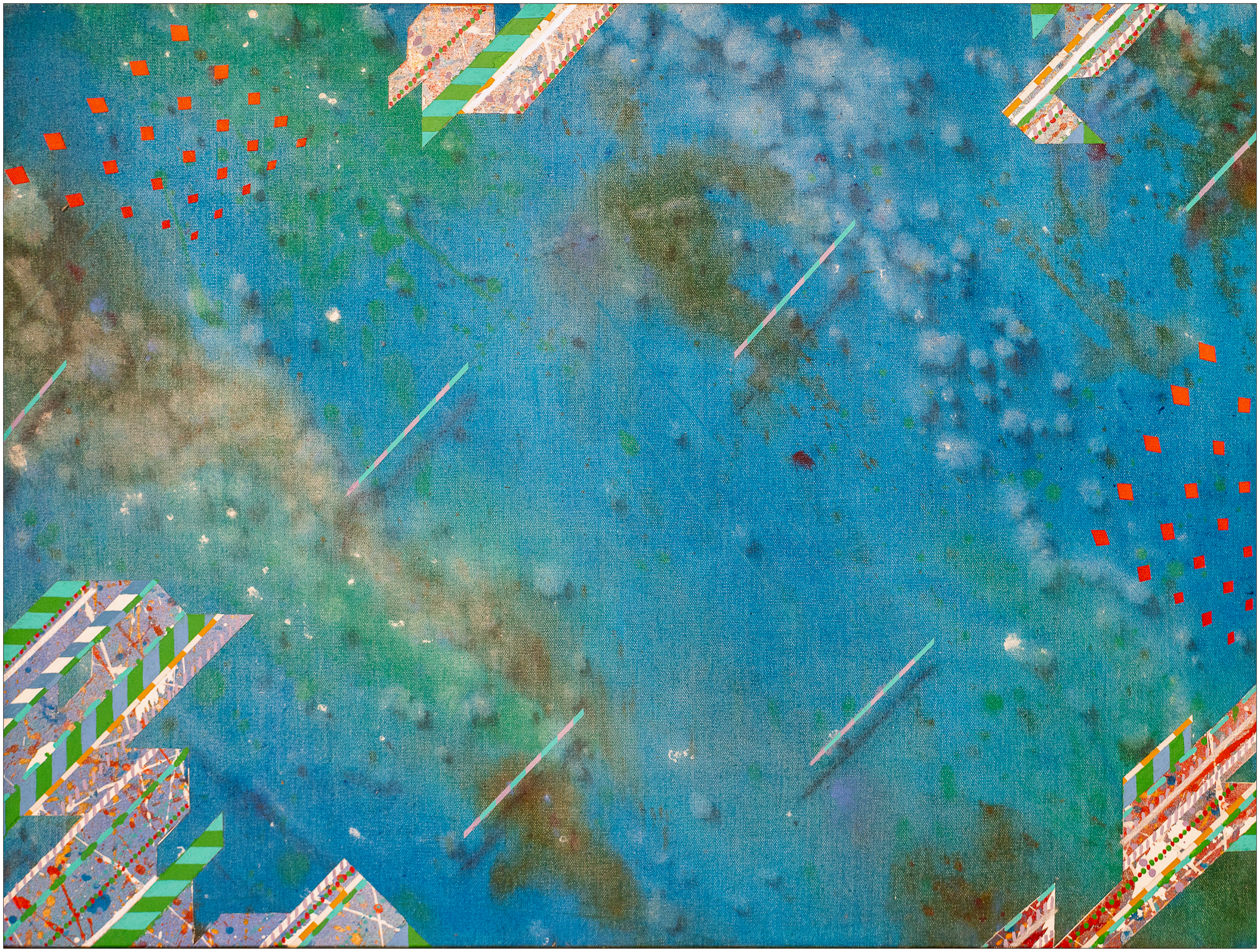
67.5 x 91.5 in. (1980)



12 x 16 in. (1978)

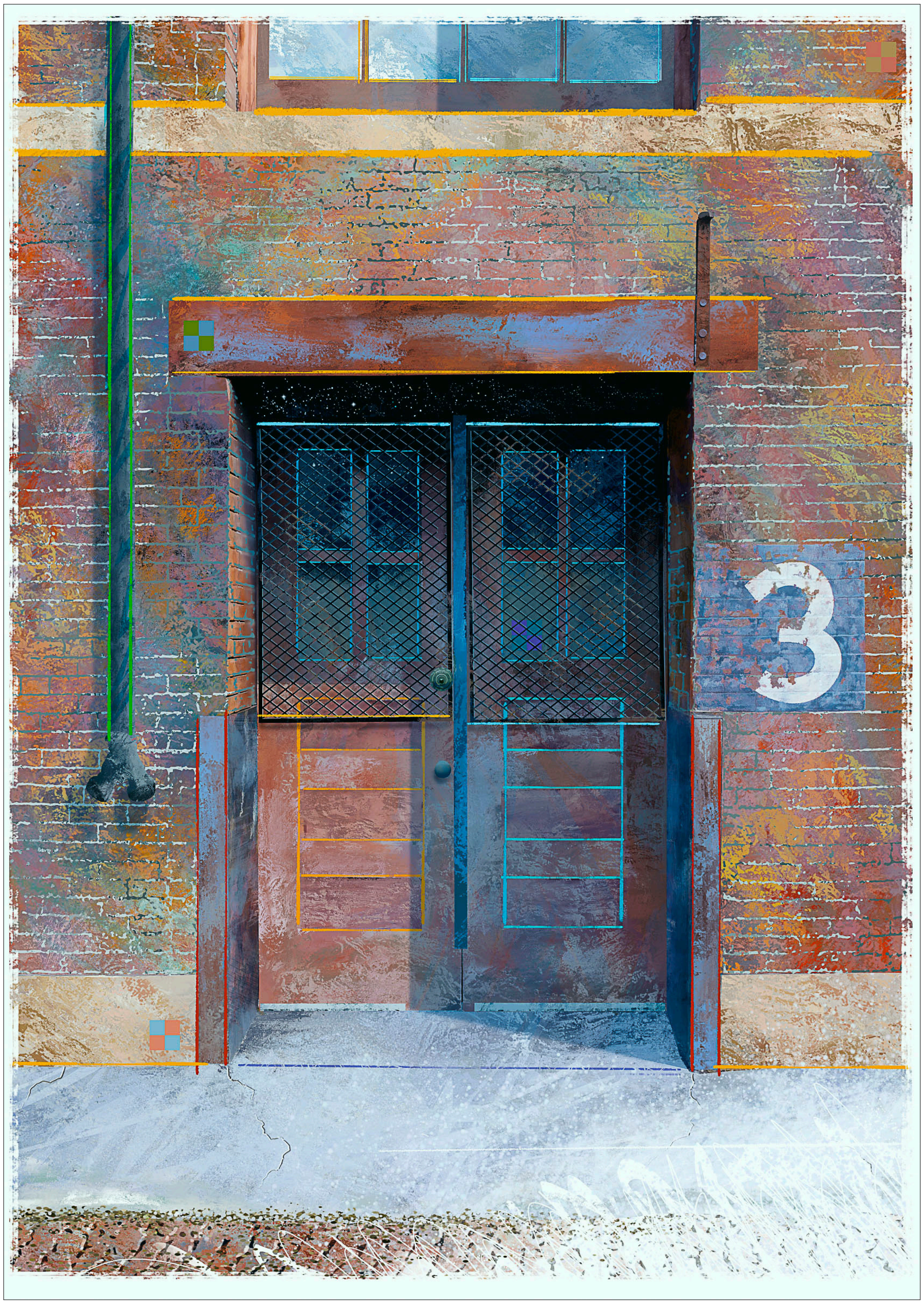
Remembrance by John Derry

John Derry is a pioneer of digital painting and one of the original authors of Corel Painter. He has a master's degree in painting from Cranbrook Academy of Art and is a practicing artist and photographer. He teaches digital painting workshops internationally and holds a Photographic Craftsman degree from Professional Photographers of America.



Untitled

John Derry, 1979.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.



John Derry, *Old Market*.

Peter was both my mentor and eventual friend. When I began my studies in the UNO Art department, one of my first classes was Pete's life drawing class.

He had this ability to walk into a classroom, quickly scan the student work in progress, and proceed to offer a short critique for each drawing. His comments were always honest, yet encouraging.

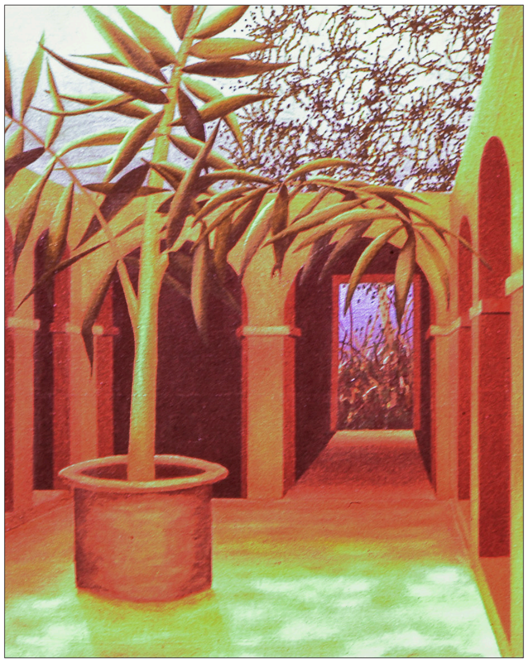
We were all amazed by this seemingly instantaneous read of the artwork, proceeded by valuable insight.

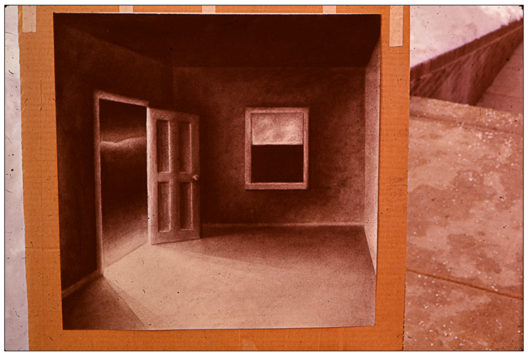
I remember being especially looking forward to his comments on a drawing-in-progress I was rather pleased with. He walked up, took a quick look at the drawing, turned to me and with a completely straight face and sparkle in his eye said, "You have a booger in your nose." and proceeded to the next student.

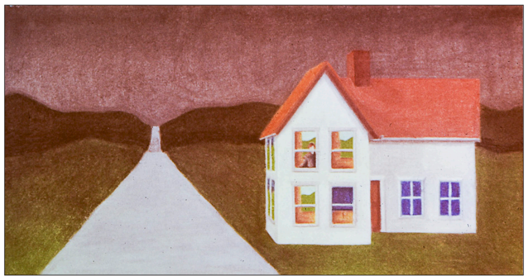
That was Pete. And I'll love him forever for it.

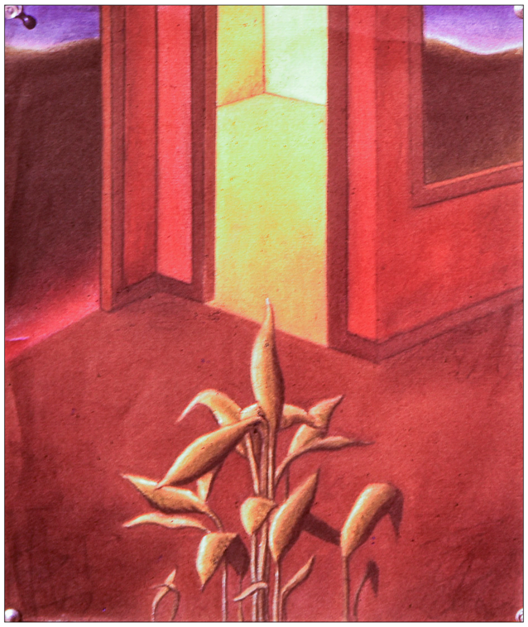
—John Derry

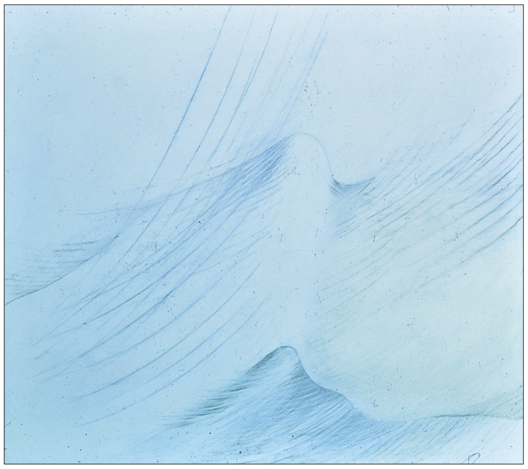
Student Work, 1976 to 1979

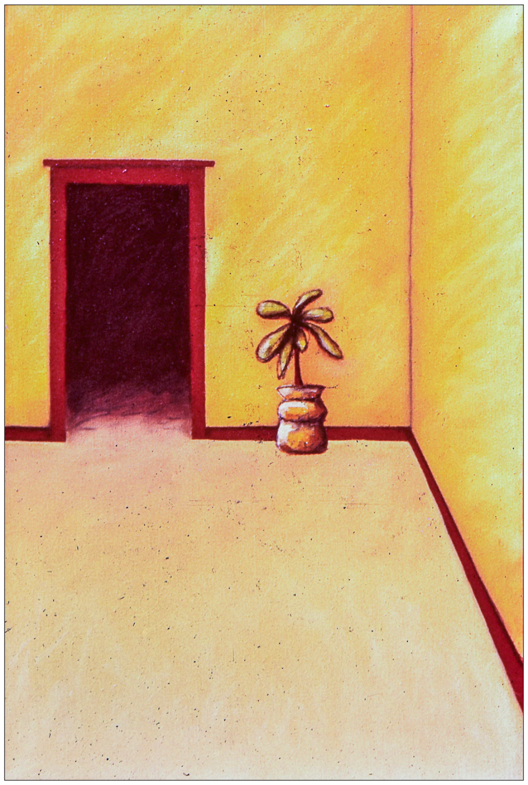

Robin Fergus, 1976, oil

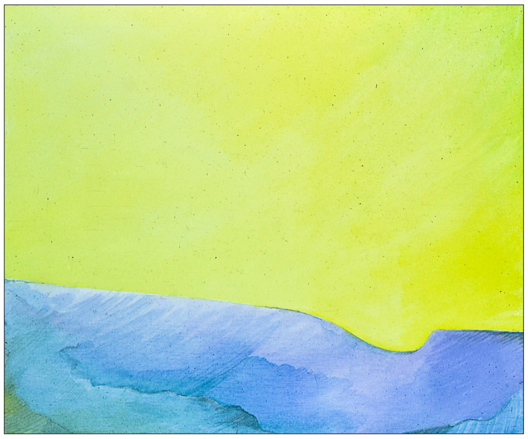

Robin Fergus, 1977

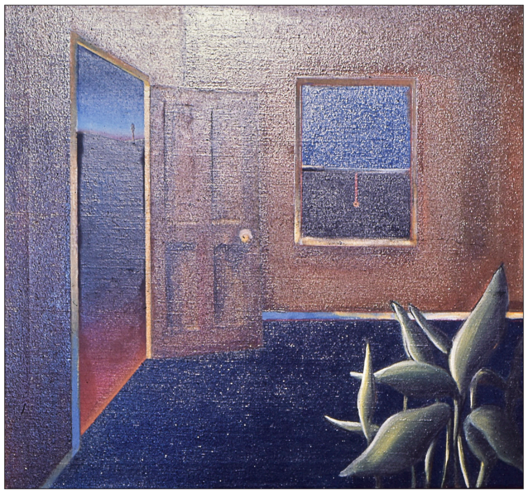

Robin Fergus, 1978

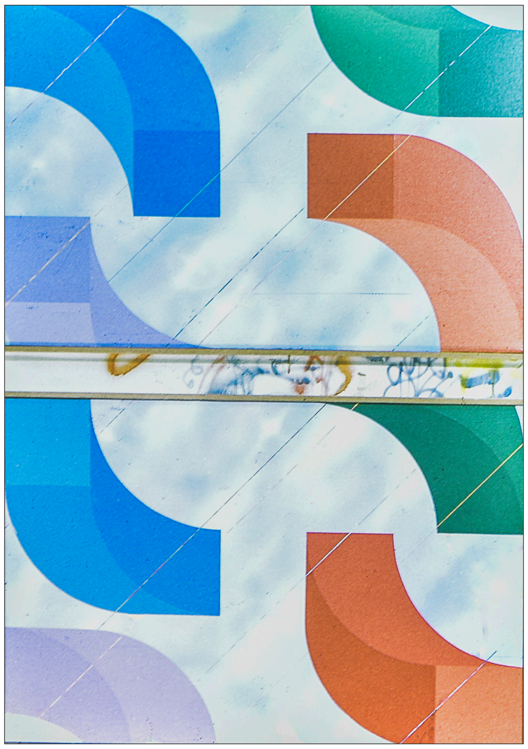

Robin Fergus, 1977, charcoal and pastel

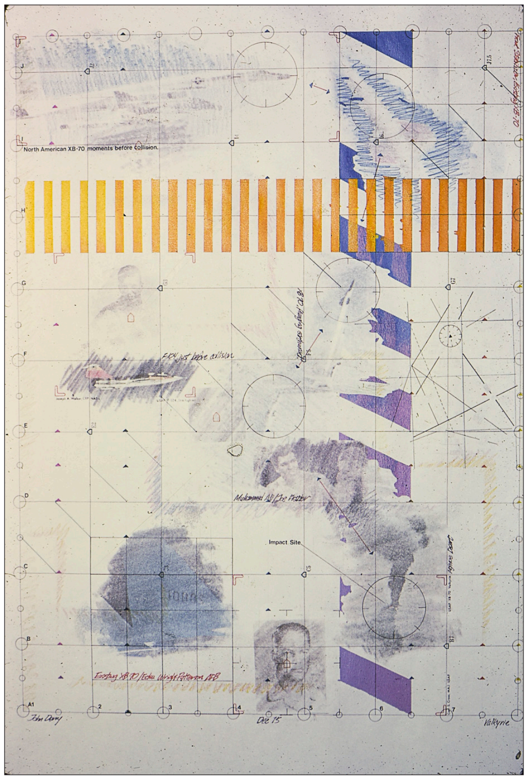

P. Freeman, 1976

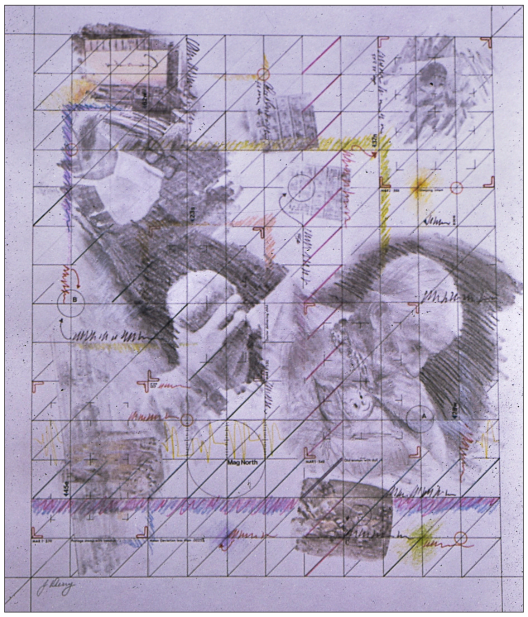

Robin Fergus, 1977, oil

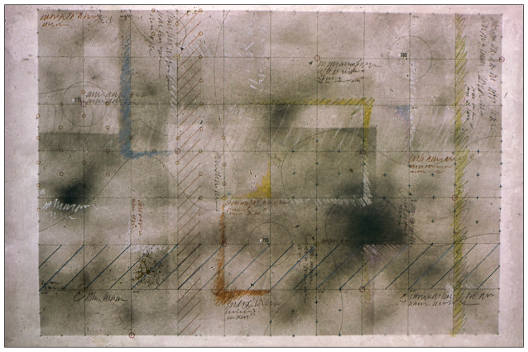

P. Freeman, 1976

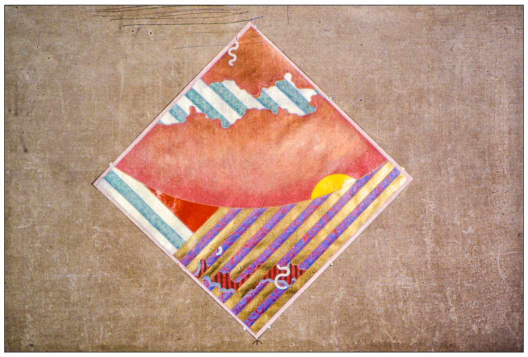

Robin Fergus, 1977, oil

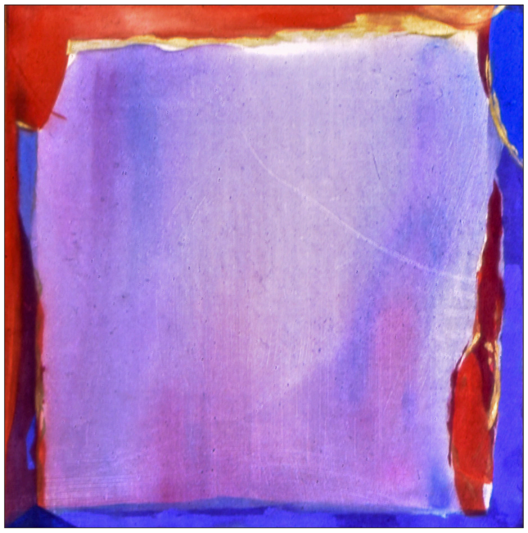

John Derry, 1976, acrylic

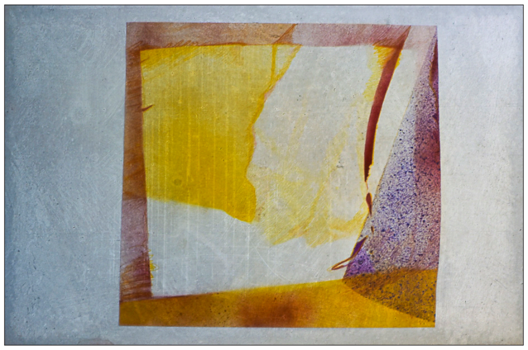

John Derry, mixed media, 24 x 18 in.

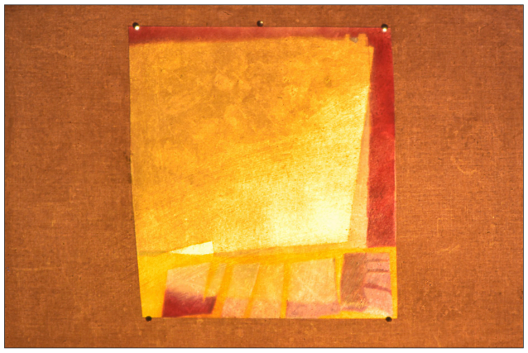

John Derry, mixed media


John Derry, 1979, mixed media


John Derry, 1979


Paula George, 1978, acrylic, 63 x 63 in.


Paula George, 1978, mixed media


Paula George, 1978, mixed media

Prints and Mixed Media: 1977 to 1987

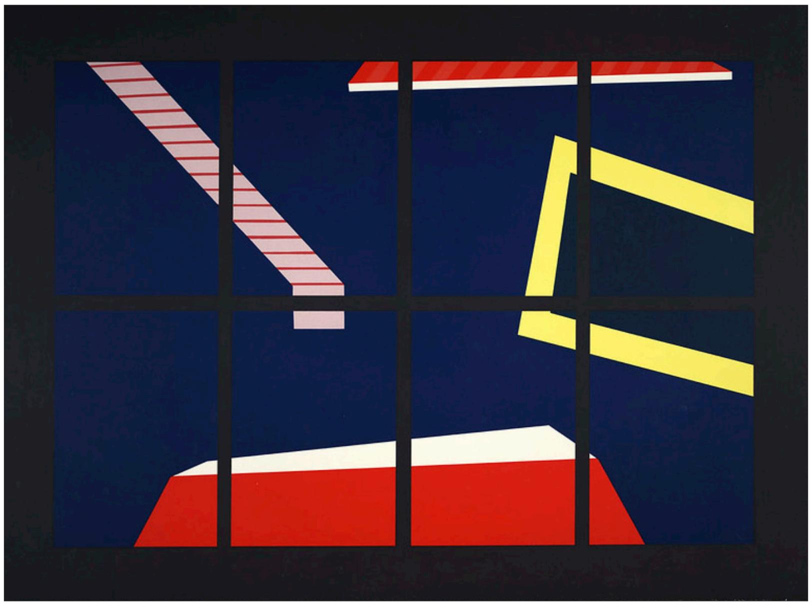
Most of my father's production involved painting, but he kept a hand in adjacent arts.

In February 1977, Dad attended a printmaking workshop at Ilinois State University, an experience that led to several prints. (Normal Editions Workshop, or NEW, was founded by former student and lifelong friend Jim Butler.) According to Veda Rives Aukerman, Interim Director (2022) and Master Printer of the Normal Editions Workshop, "Your father's project was in the first year of Normal Editions. It was the 8th project in what are now over 300 projects with over 150 artists since 1976." From that work came a print several of us own (see below). Dad would make a few more prints in his career.

In 1979 he experimented with airbrushing, using the process to provide airy backgrounds behind the familiar pyramids and other shapes.

And in the mid-1980s he made a few watercolors and some "mixed media," i.e., a combination of pencil and acrylic.

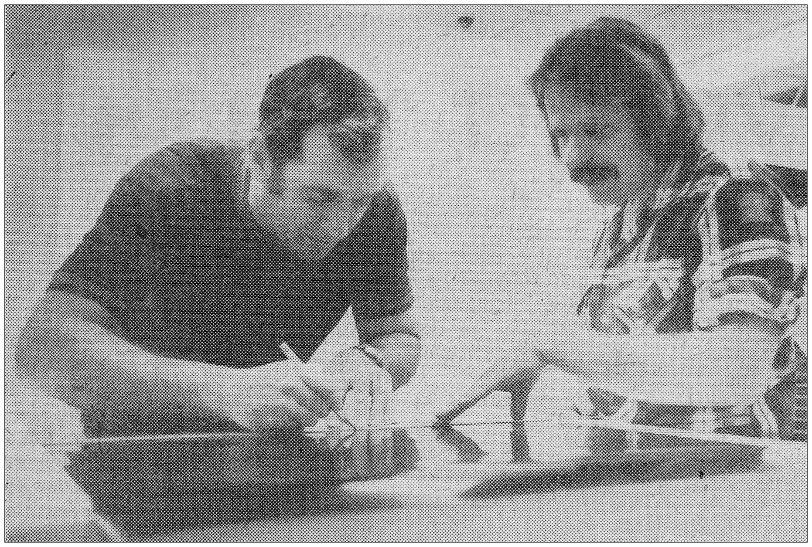
Painting, though, remained his main focus.



Untitled (*Window*), 1977. Five-color lithograph, 22 x 30 in.

Unknown Newspaper, 1977

Nebraska Artist Working at ISU



Peter Hill, left, and Illinois State University artist Jim Butler* prepare a litho stone in Normal Editions Workshop.

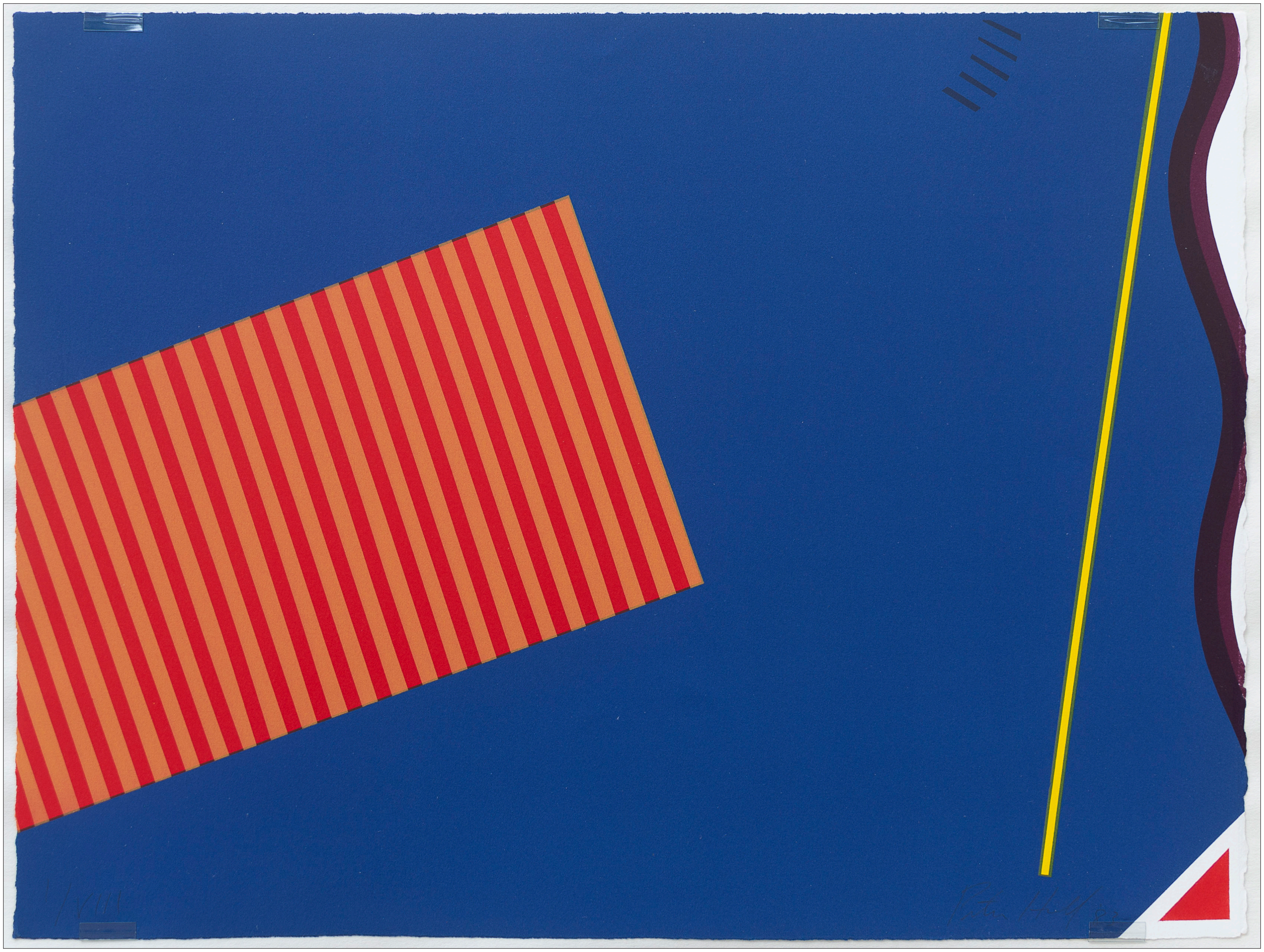
Peter Hill, a faculty member at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, is at Illinois State University this week to execute a print at the Normal Editions Workshop, the professional lithography shop in the Center for the Visual Arts (CVA).

Hill, a painter, will present a free, public lecture at 7:30 p.m. today in Room 151 of the CVA building.

Hill's work has been included in more than 70 juried exhibitions and has won purchase awards in several shows, including the Sioux City and Waterloo annuals; the Midwest Biennial at the Joslyn Museum; the Mid-America at the Nelson, Atkins Gallery in Kansas City, and the Michigan Artists Show at the Detroit Art Institute. He earned a purchase award four times in the Springfield, Mo., Annual.

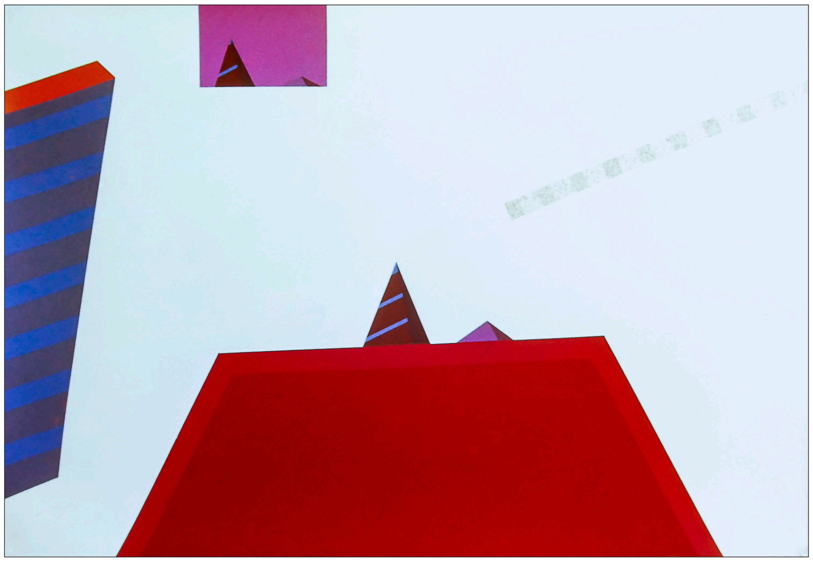
Hill has had one-man shows in such galleries as the Joslyn Art Museum; the Sheldon Gallery; Stuhr Museum, and Doane College, Hastings College and Concordia College, all in Nebraska; and at the University of South Dakota.

* I've provided the original caption, but Jim Butler informed me via e-mail that the man pictured next to my father is Steve Britko, NEW's printer in 1977.

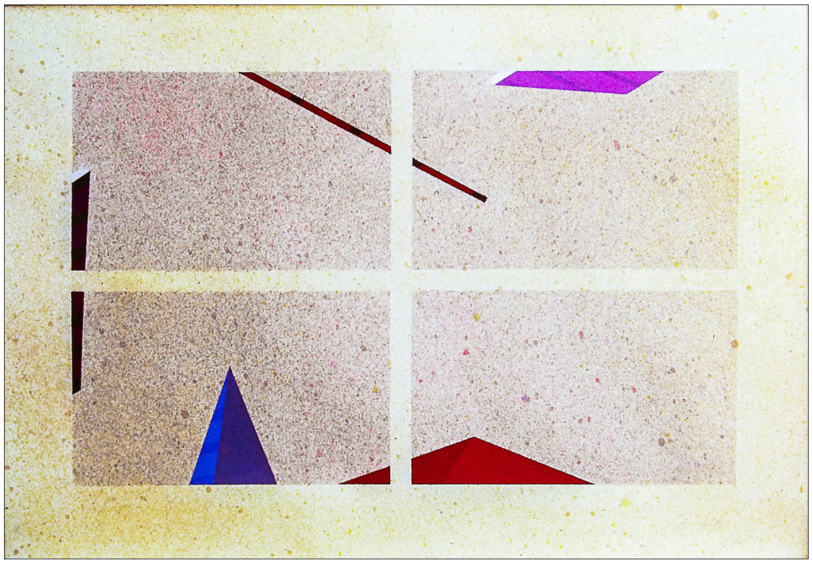


Untitled

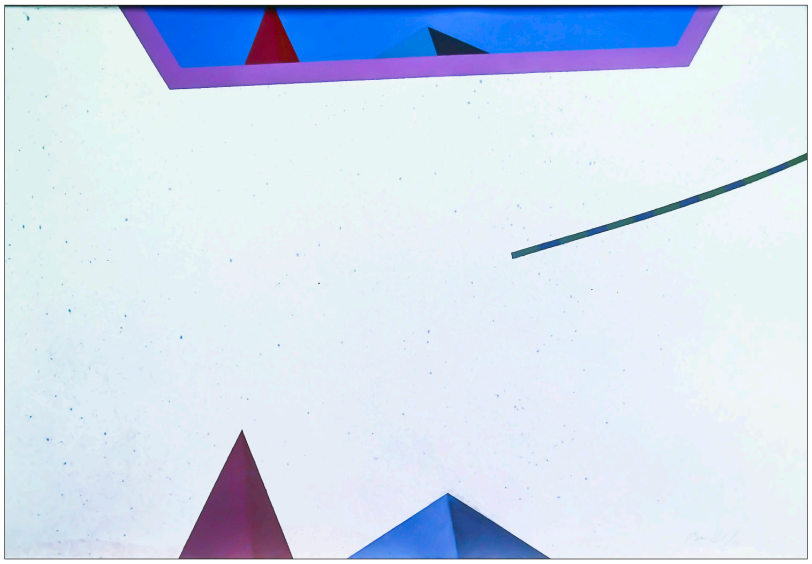
1977. Color lithograph, 15 x 20 in.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.



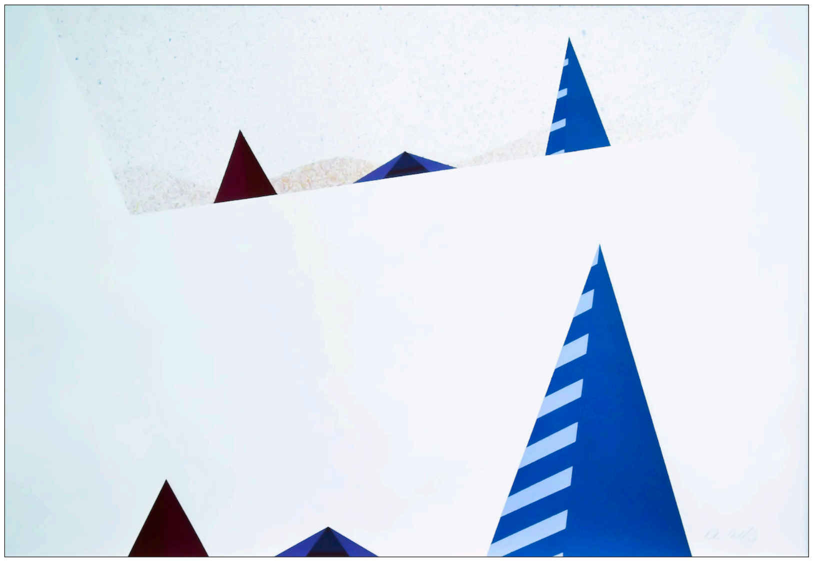
Study for a Painting, 1979. Mixed media, 21 x 30 in.
Final version collection of Meghan Freeman and Evan Porter.



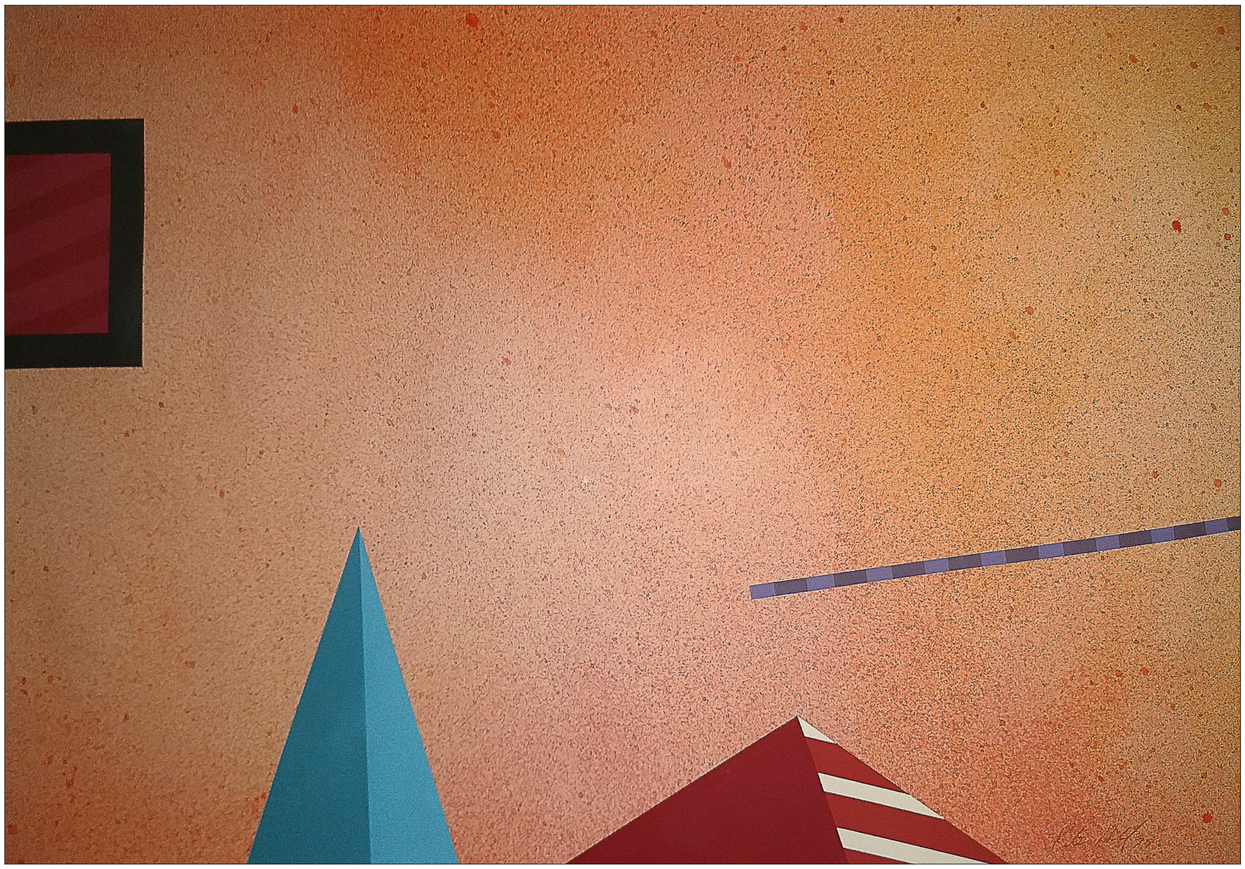
Untitled, 1979. Airbrush and acrylic on paper, 21 x 30 in.



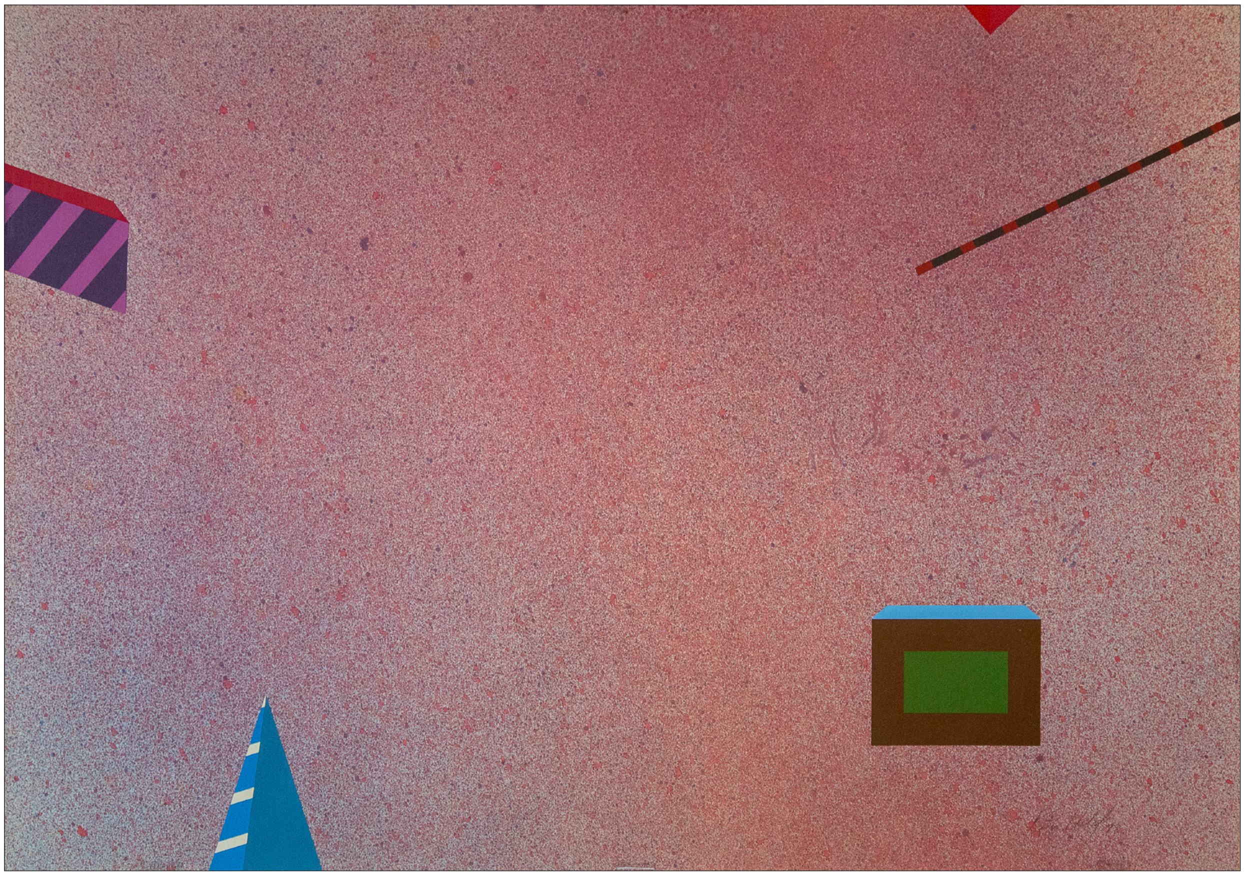
Study for a Large Painting, 1978. Mixed media, 21 x 30 in.



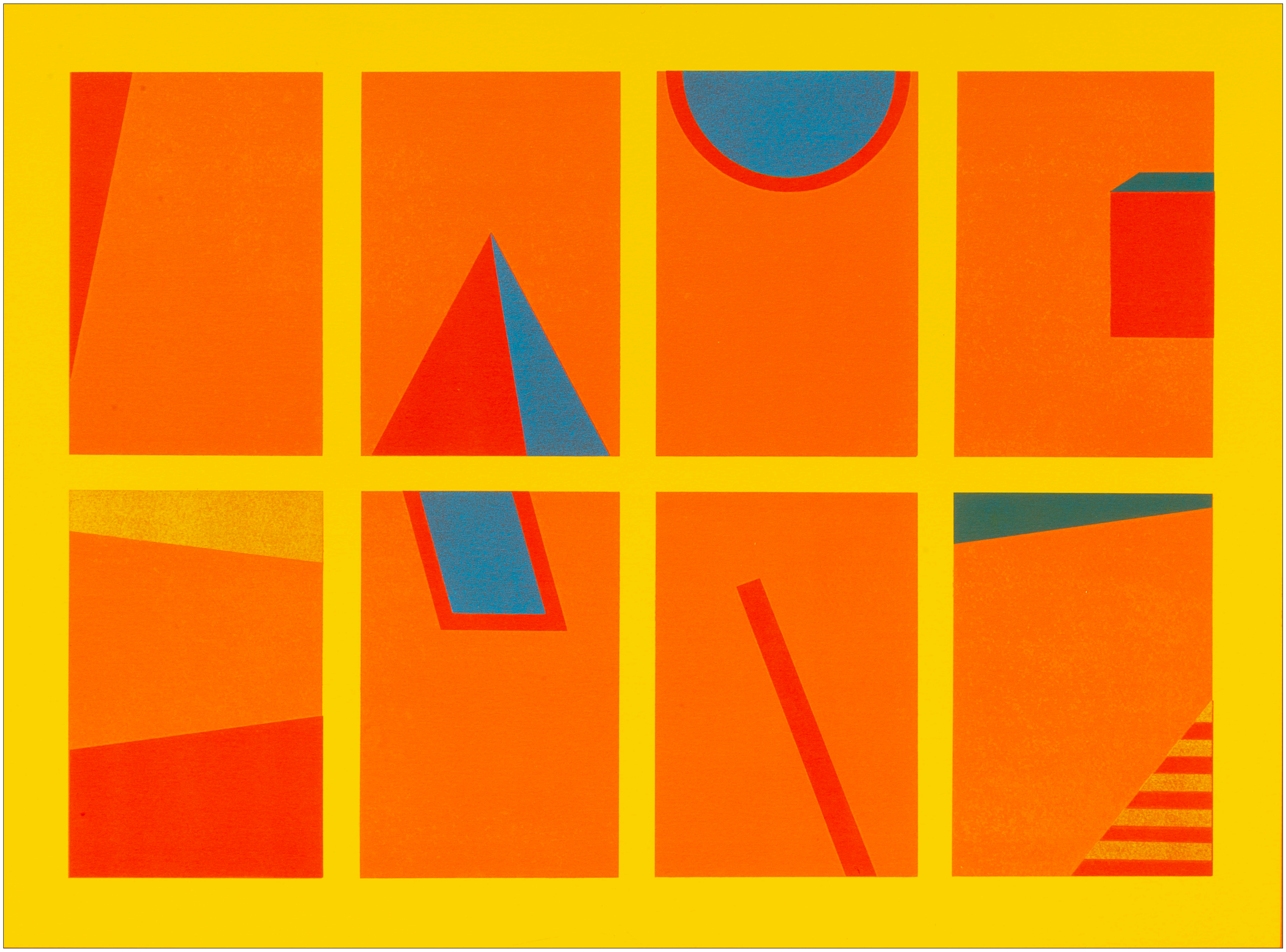
Study for a Large Painting, 1978. Mixed media, 21 x 30 in.



Untitled, 1979. Acrylic and airbrushed paint on paper, 21 x 30 in. Collection of Marilyn Rock.

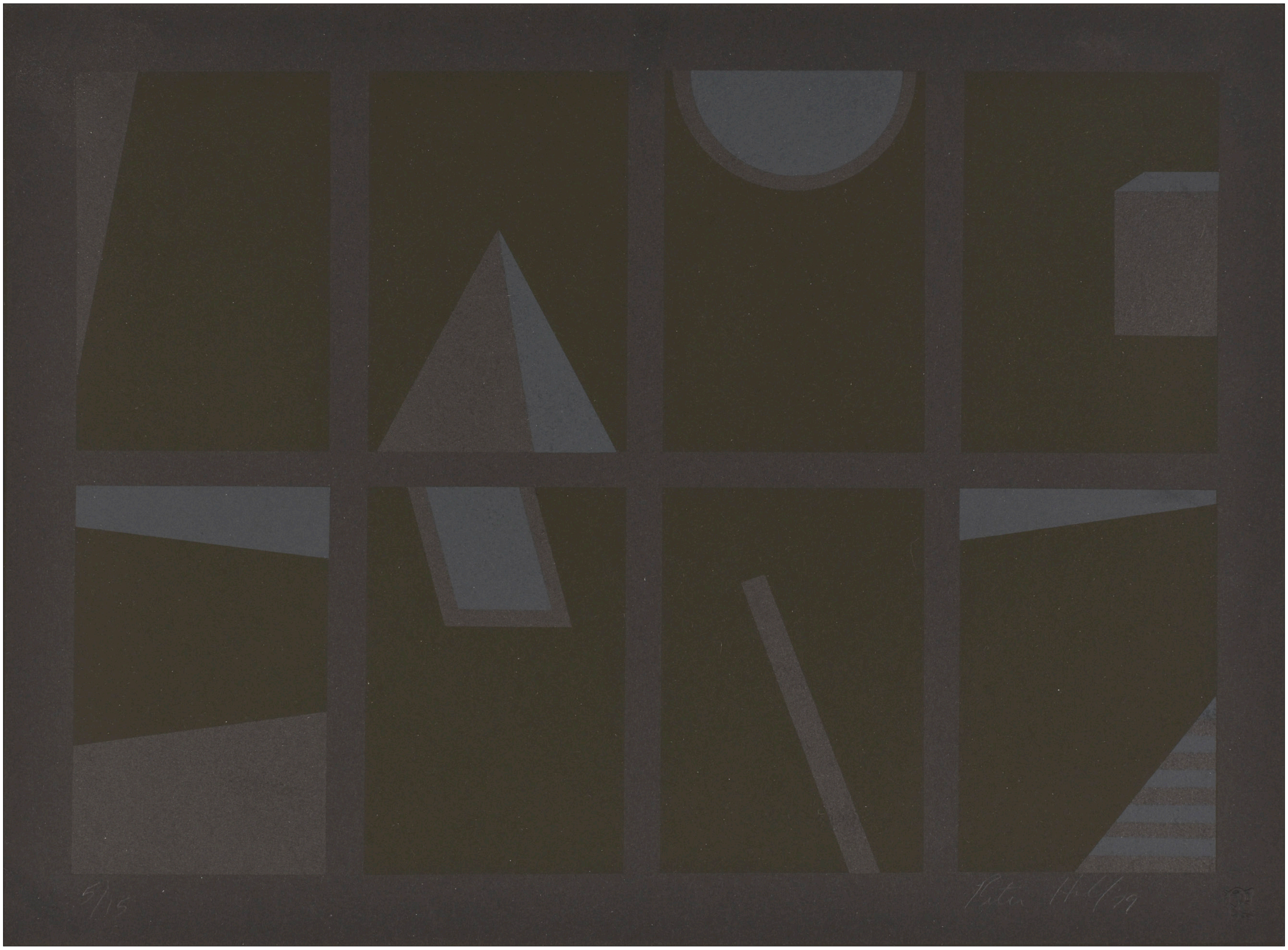


Untitled, 1979. Acrylic and airbrushed paint, 21 x 30 in. Collection of Jonathan and Maureen Hill.



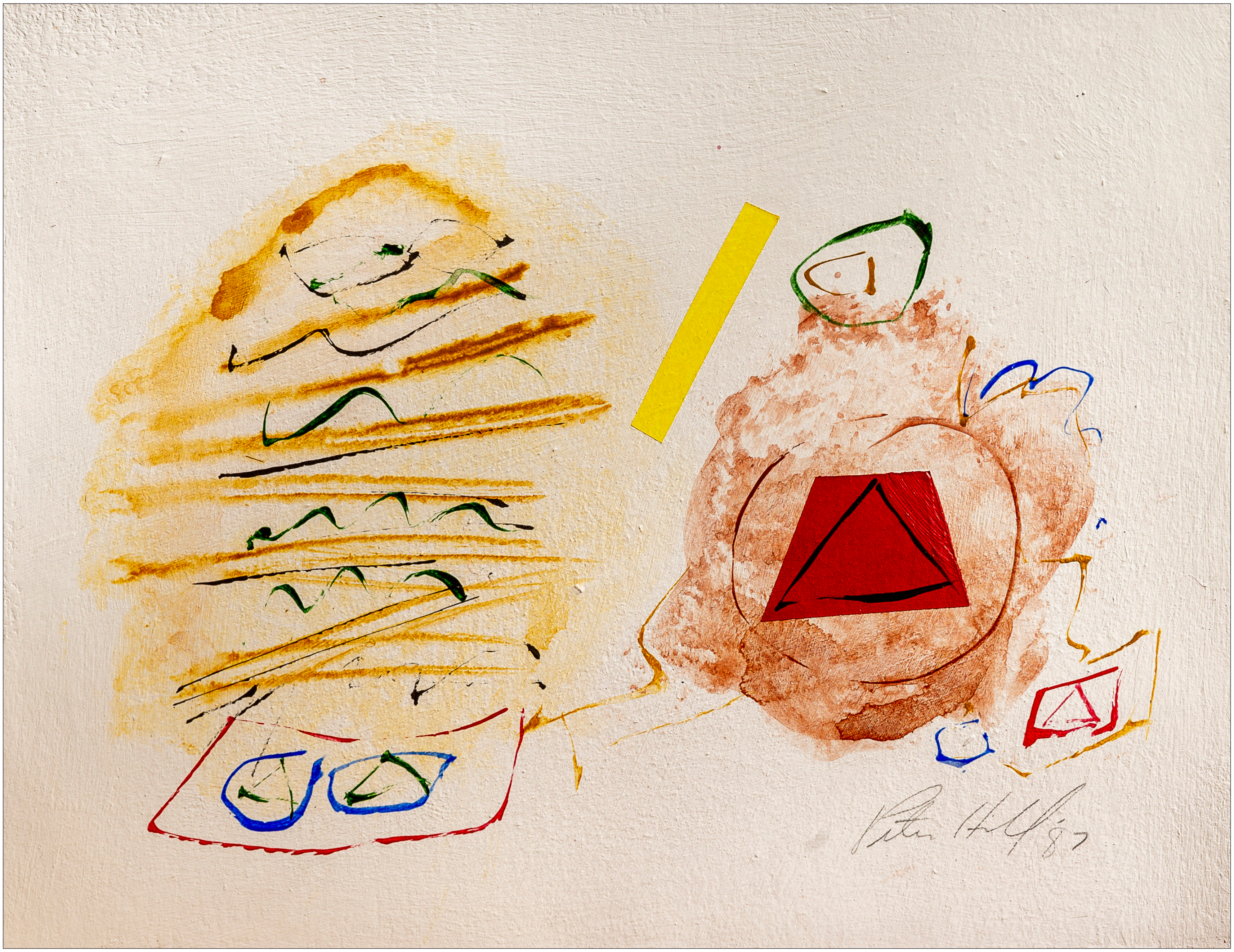
Untitled

1979. Lithograph, 15 x 20 in.
Various collections.



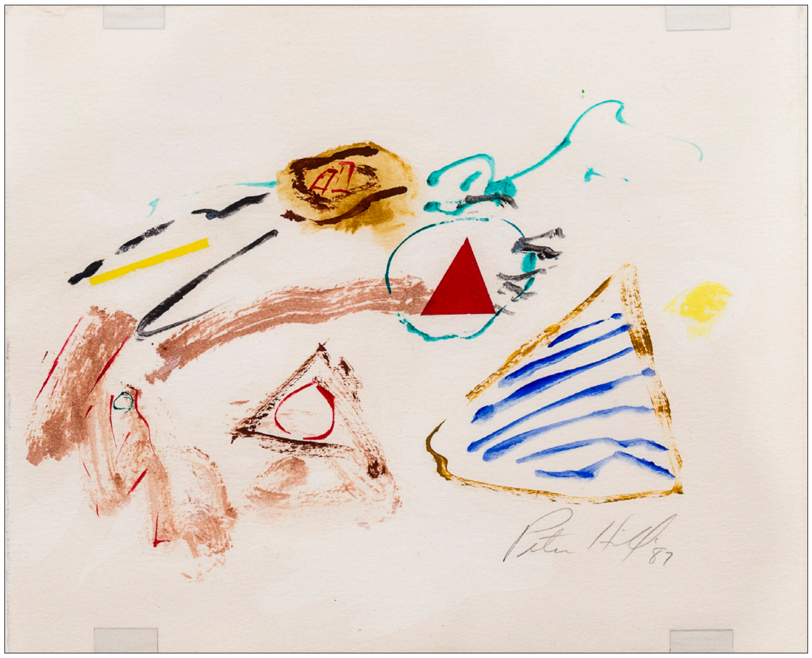
Untitled

1979. Lithograph, 15 x 20 in.
Various collections. Photograph courtesy of the Sioux City Art Center.

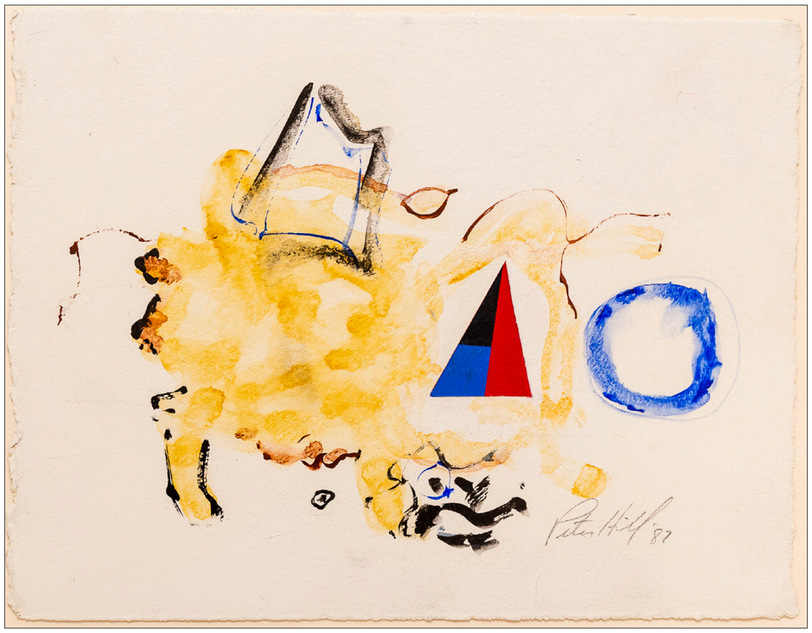


Untitled

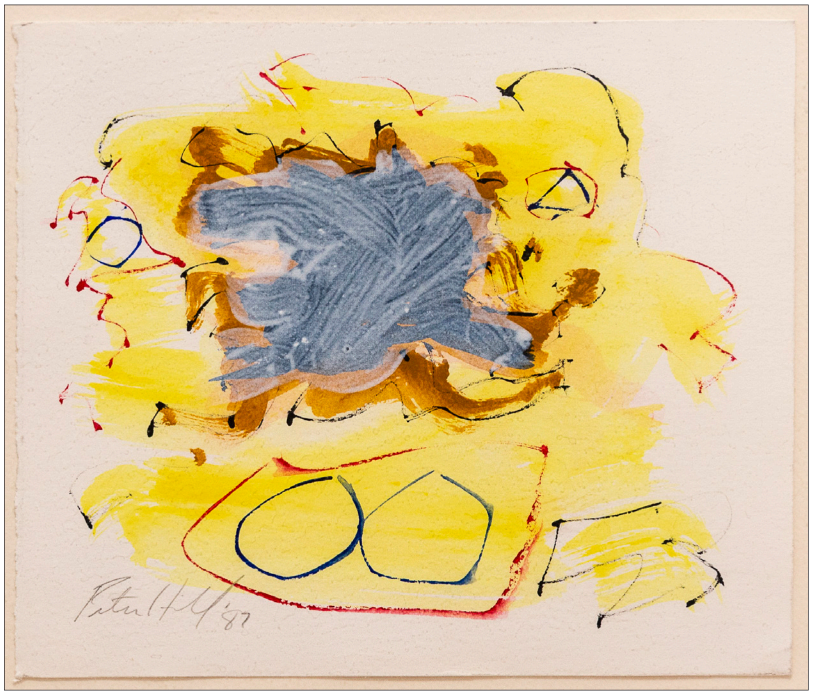
1987. Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 7.5 x 9.75 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman. Canada.



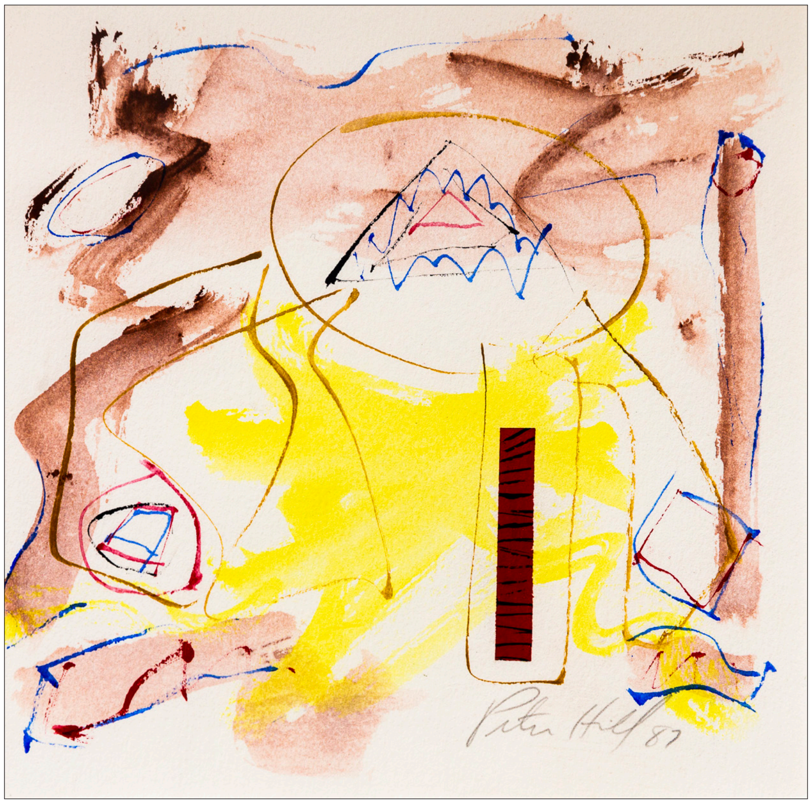
Untitled, 1987. Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 7 x 8.5 in.
Collection of David and Tracy Wintroub.



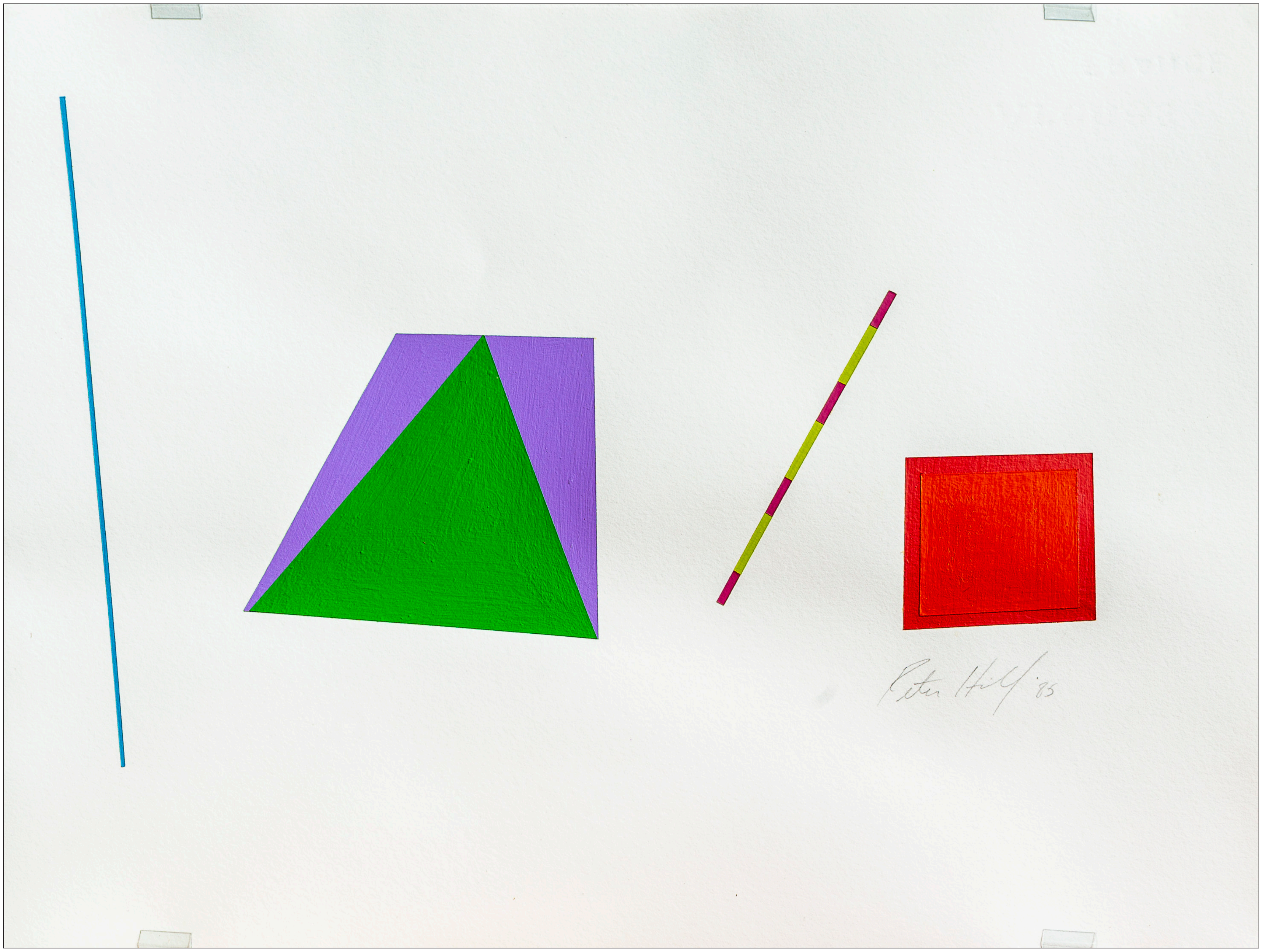
Untitled, 1987. Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 7.5 x 9.75 in.
Collection of David and Tracy Wintroub.



Untitled, 1987. Watercolor and ink, 7 x 8 in.
Collection of David and Tracy Wintroub.



Untitled, 1987. Ink and watercolor, 8 x 7 in.
Collection of Dana and Scott Porter.

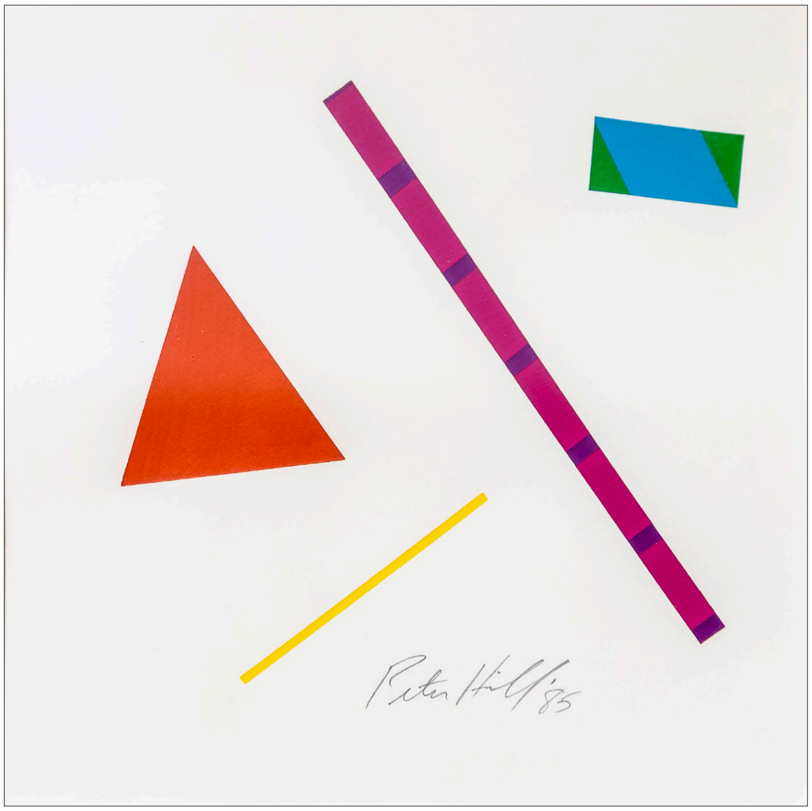


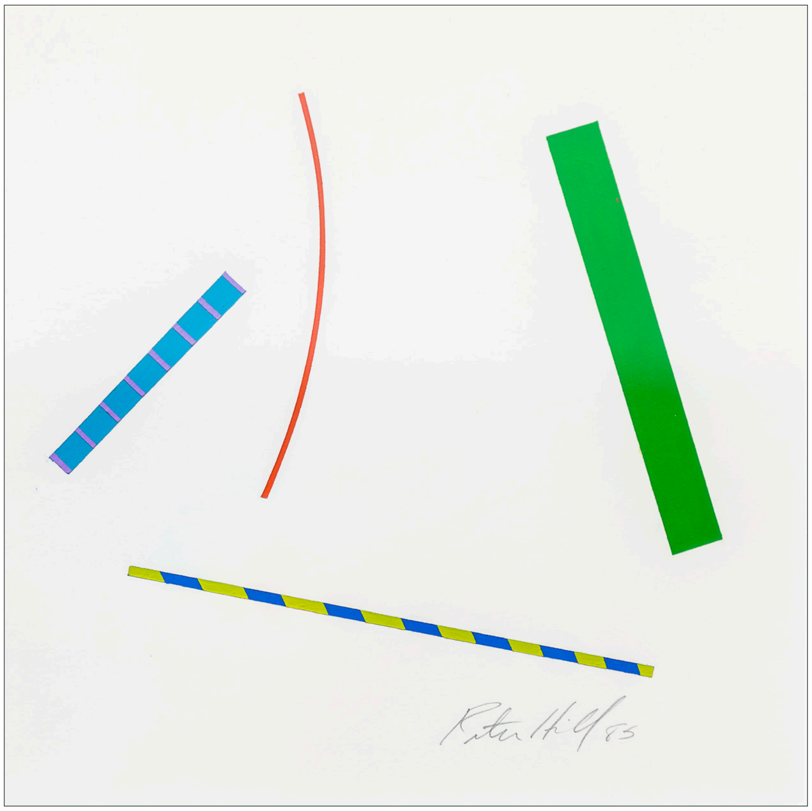
Four Pieces (above)

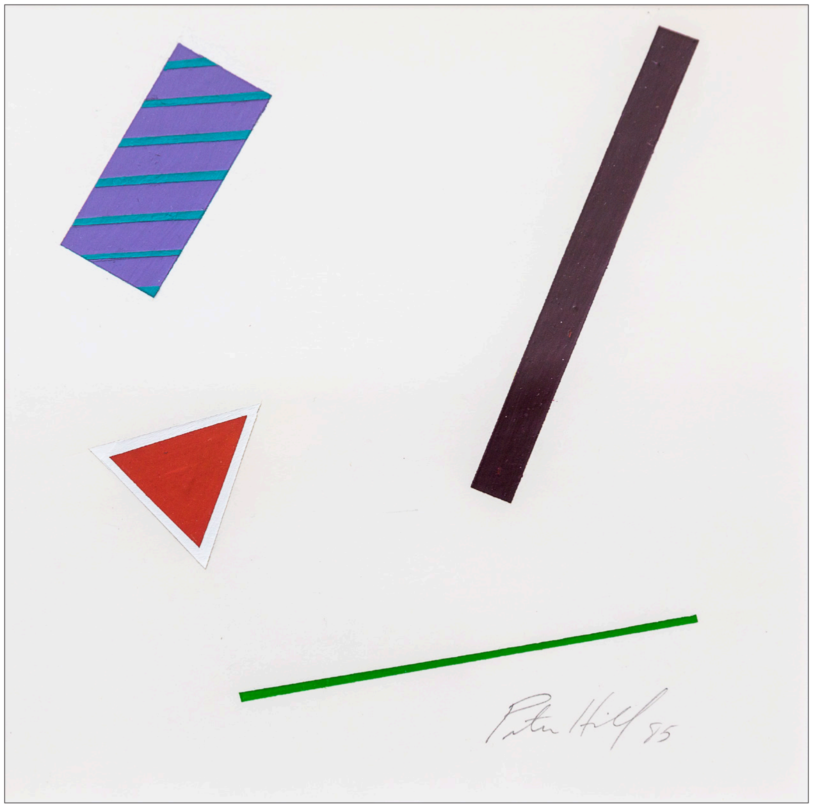
1985. Acrylic on paper, 11.5 x 15 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.

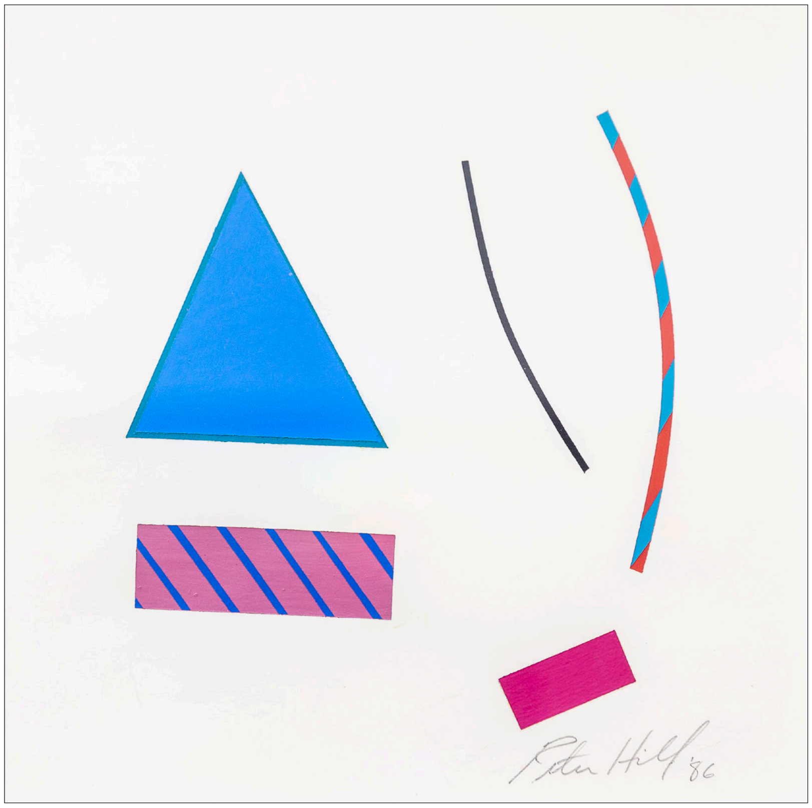
Untitled (Four Works) (opposite)

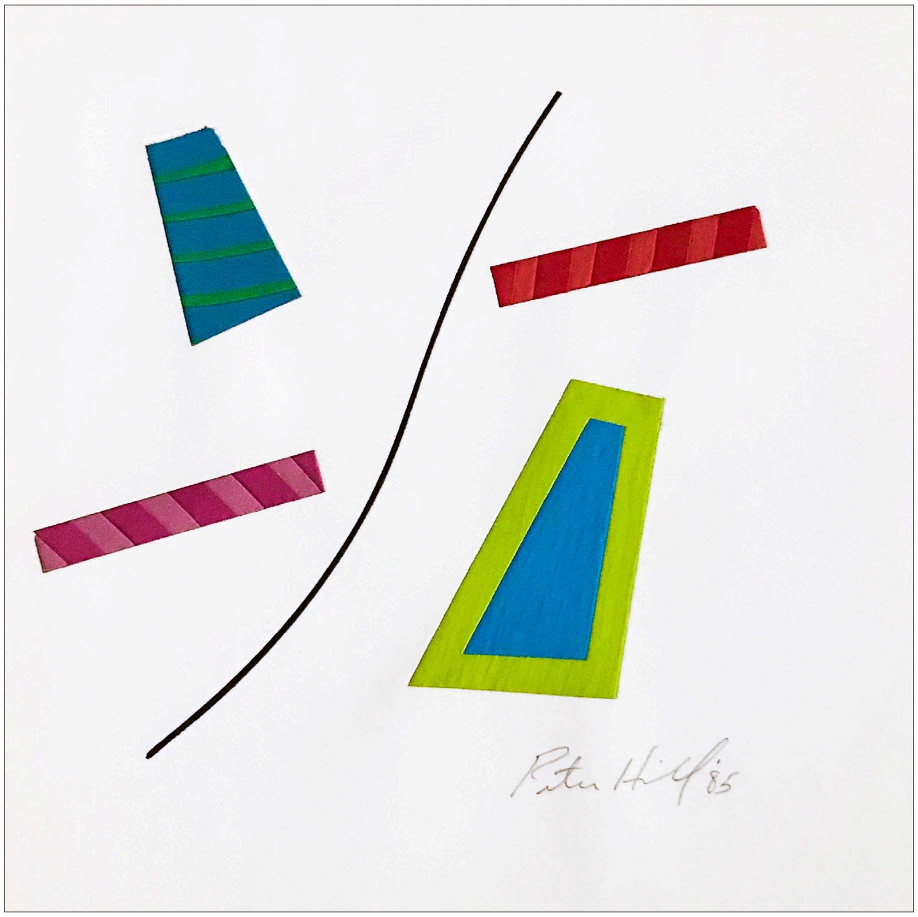
1985/6. Acrylic on paper, each 9 x 9 in.
Collection of Dana and Scott Porter.


Peter Hill '85

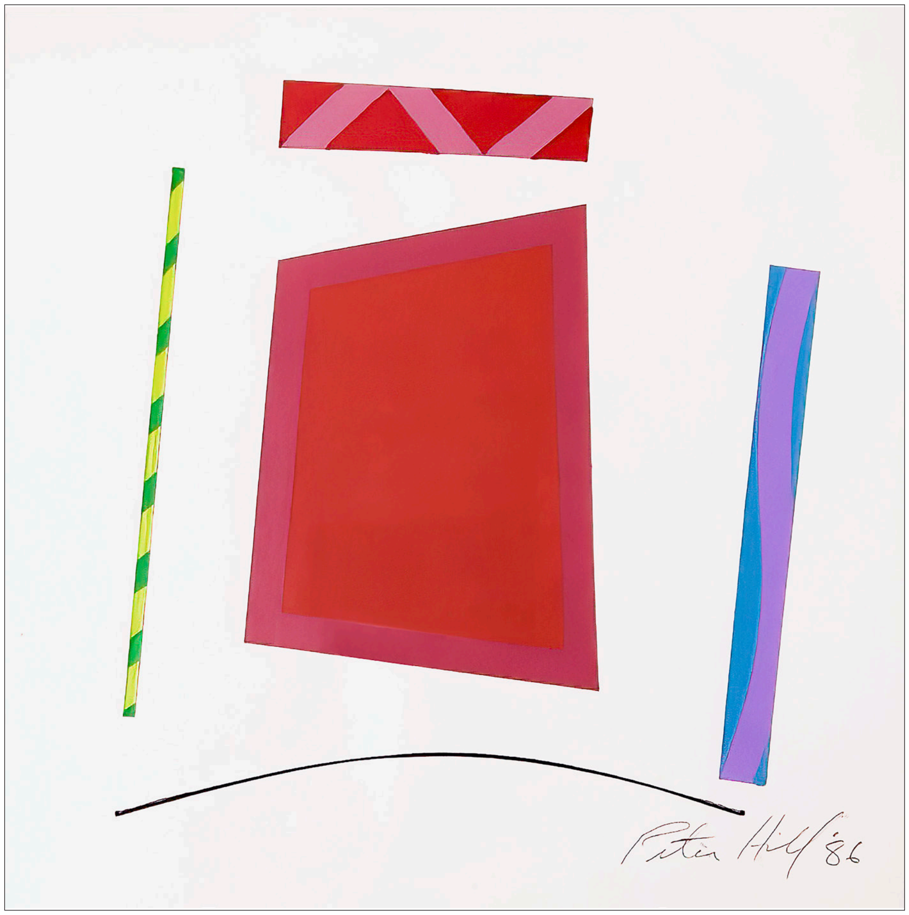

Peter Hill '85


Peter Hill '85

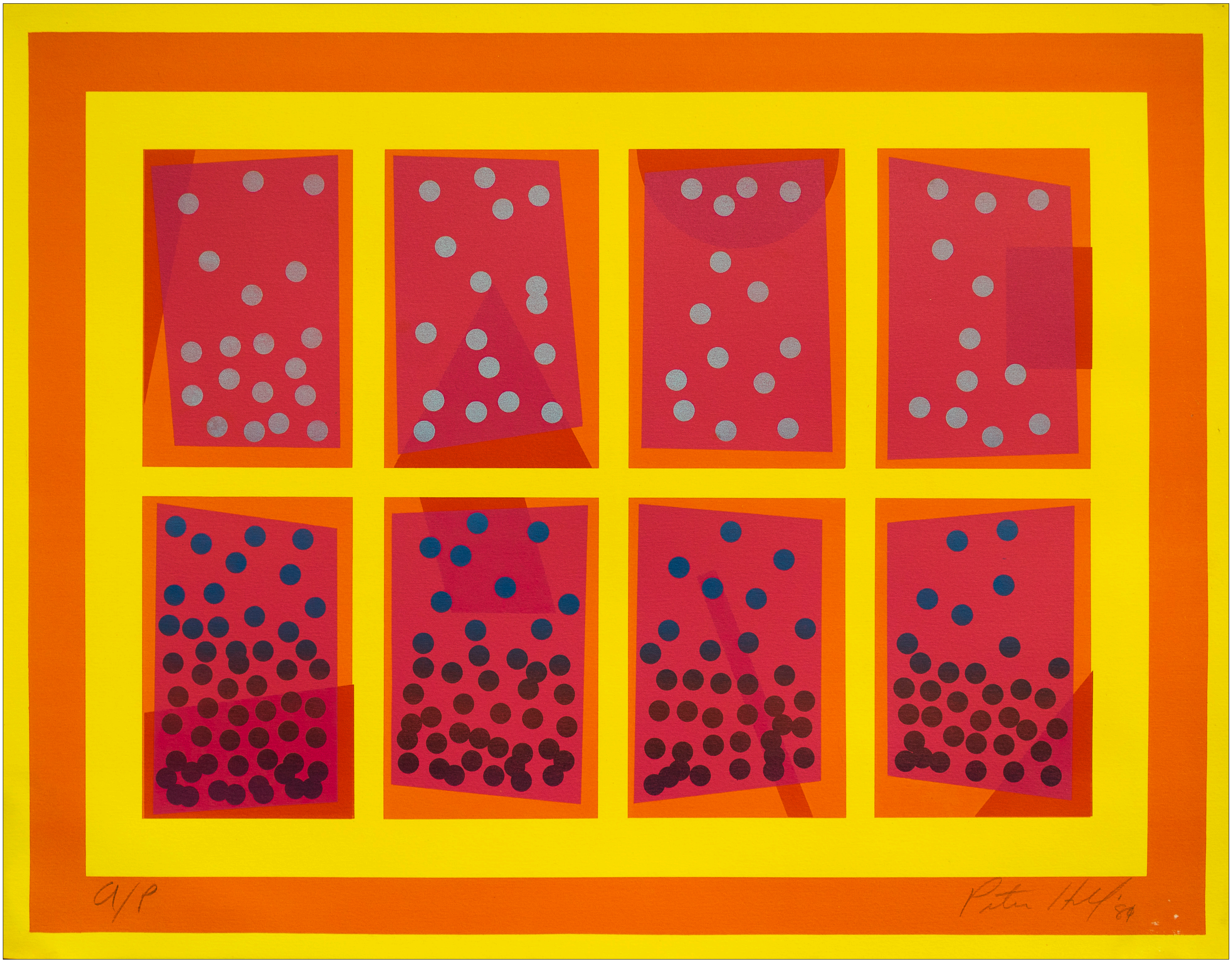

Peter Hill '86



Untitled, 1985. Acrylic on paper, 9 x 9 in.
Collection of Janet Spring.



Untitled, 1986. Acrylic on paper, 9 x 9 in.
Collection of Chuck and Kathy Campbell.

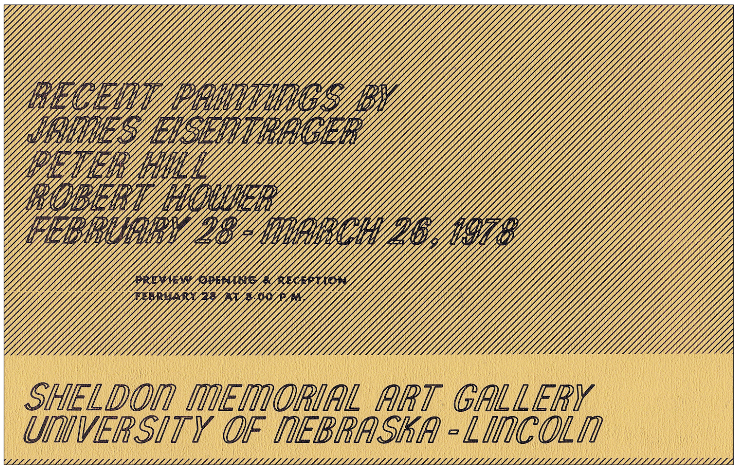


Untitled

1984. Serigraph, 17 x 22 in.
Various collections.

Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery

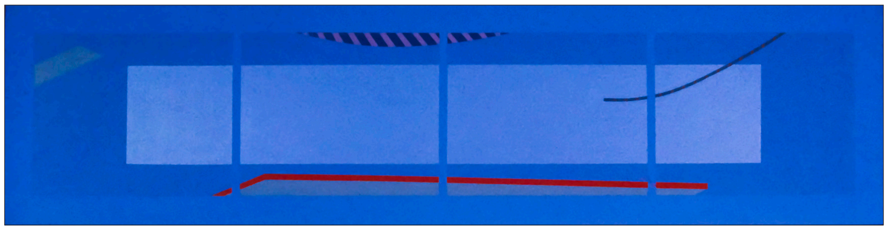
February 28 to March 26, 1978



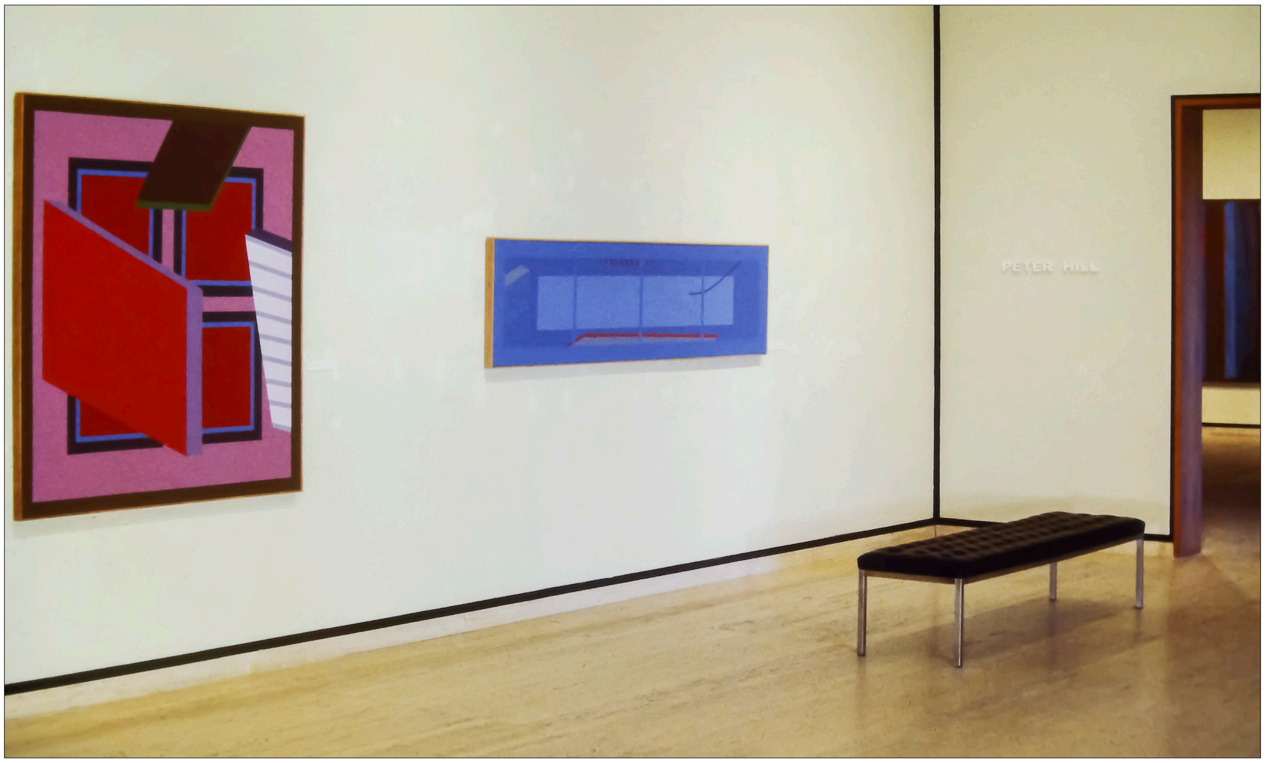
RECENT PAINTINGS BY
JAMES EISENTRAGER
PETER HILL
ROBERT HOWER
FEBRUARY 28 - MARCH 26, 1978

PREVIEW OPENING & RECEPTION
FEBRUARY 28 AT 8:00 P.M.

SHELDON MEMORIAL ART GALLERY
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA - LINCOLN

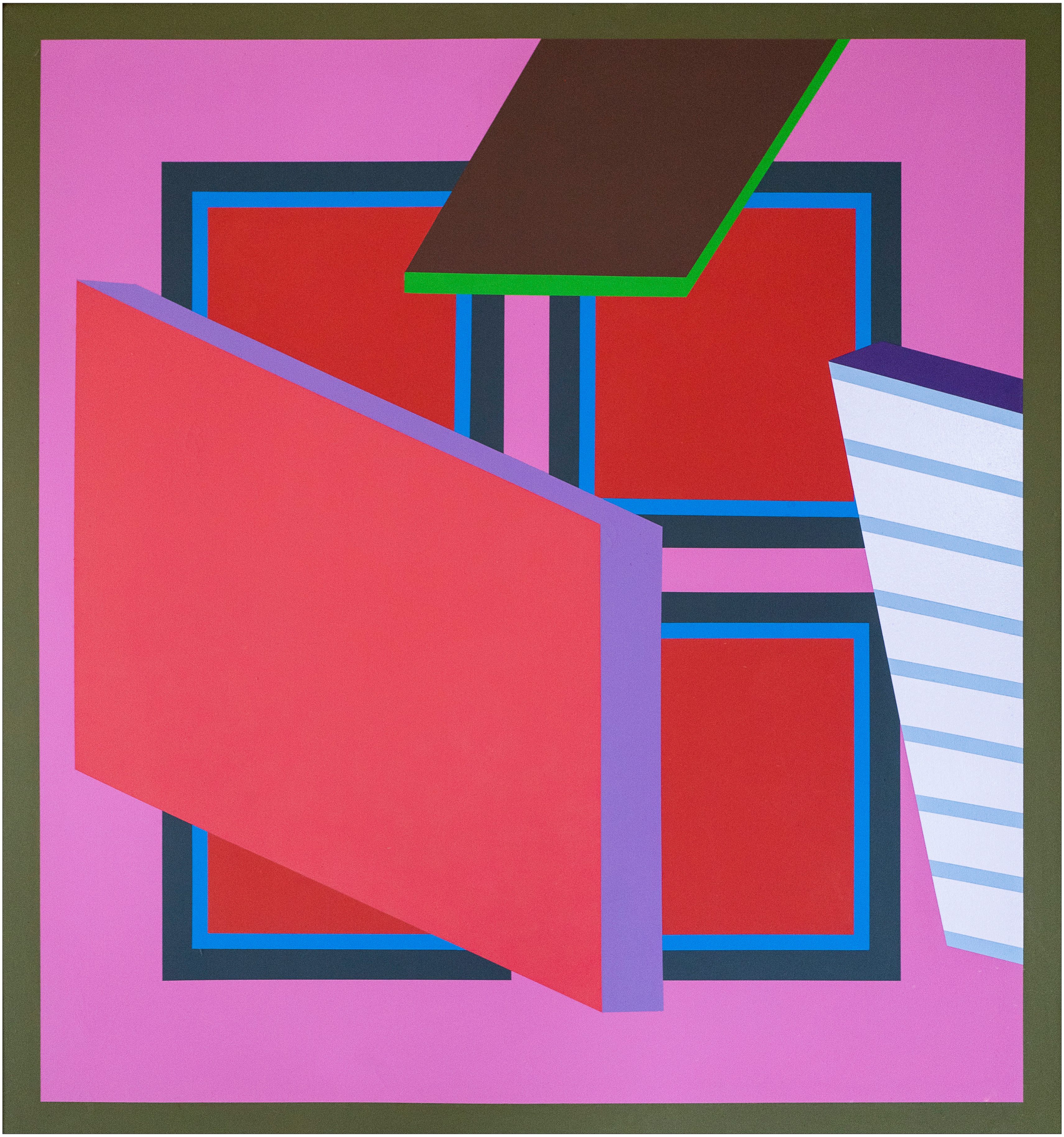


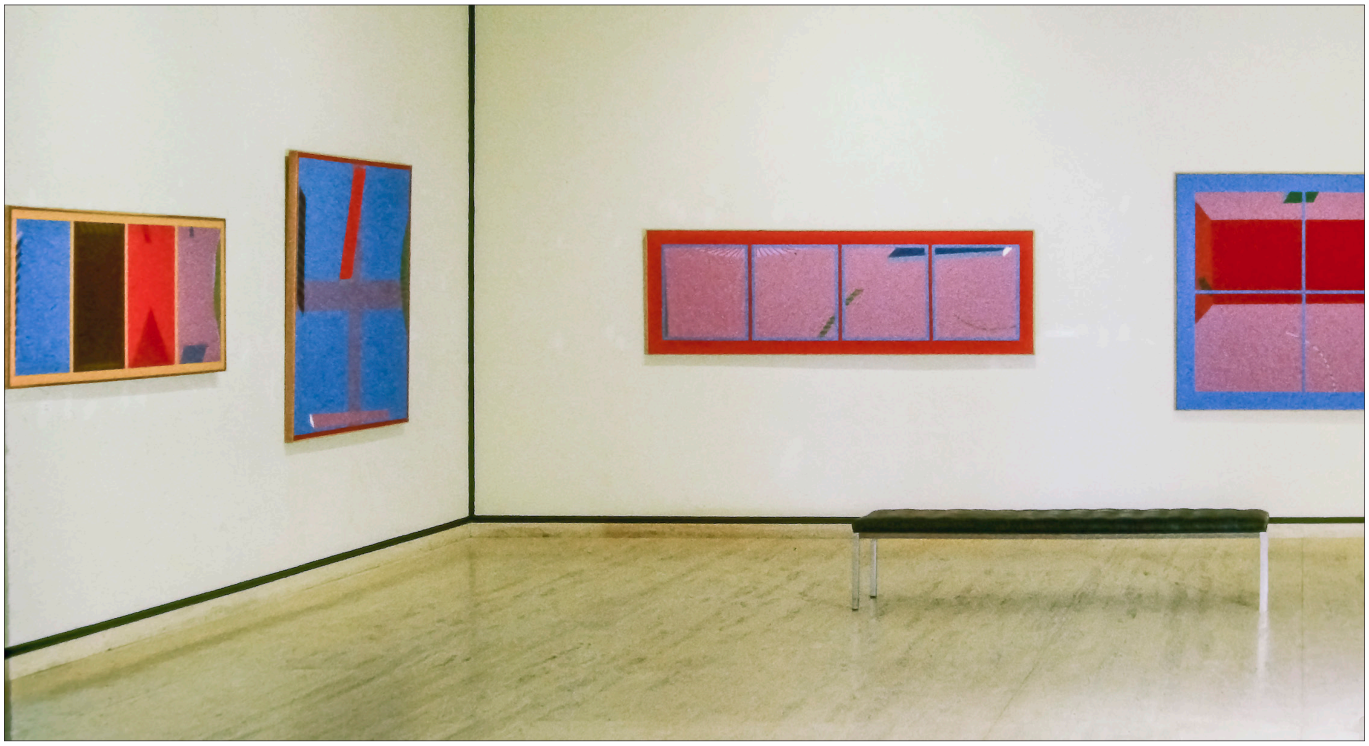
1978. Acrylic on canvas.



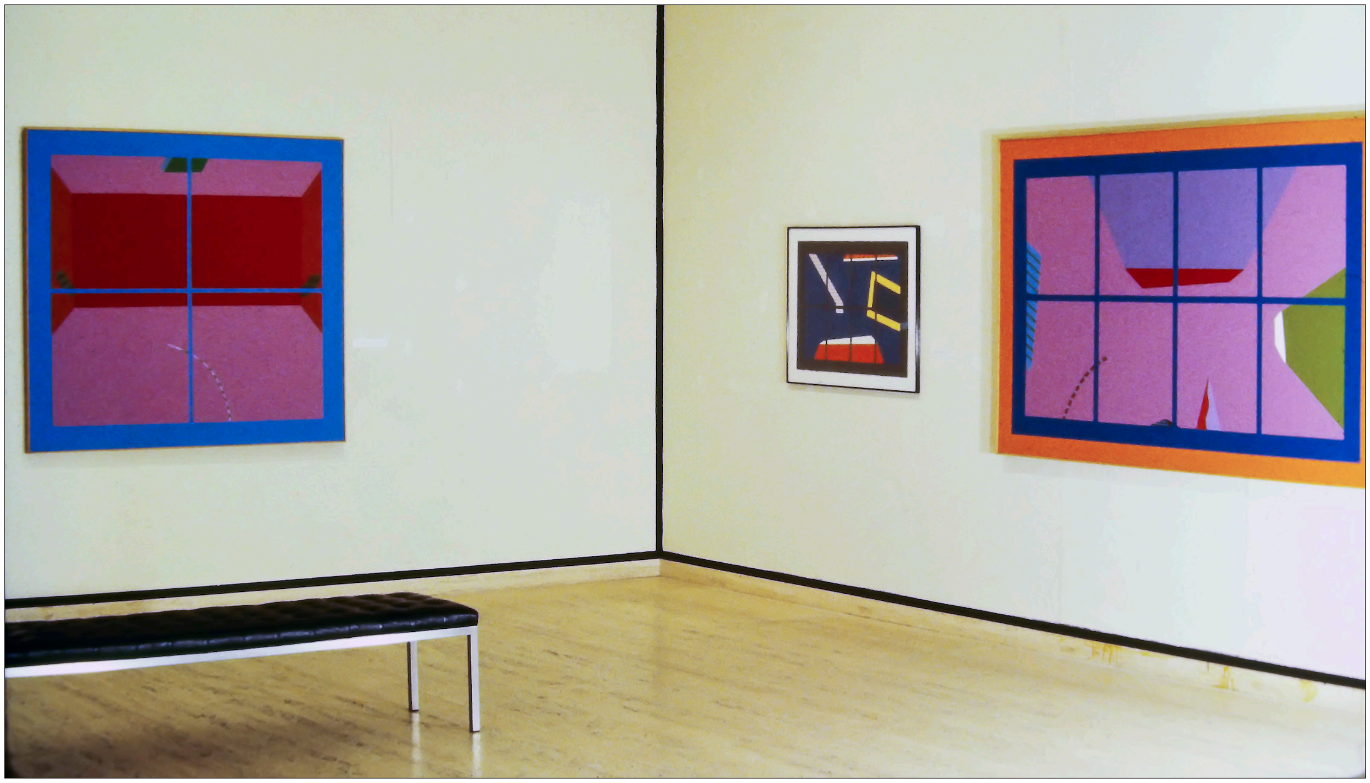
Untitled (opposite)

1978. Acrylic on canvas, 44 x 44 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.

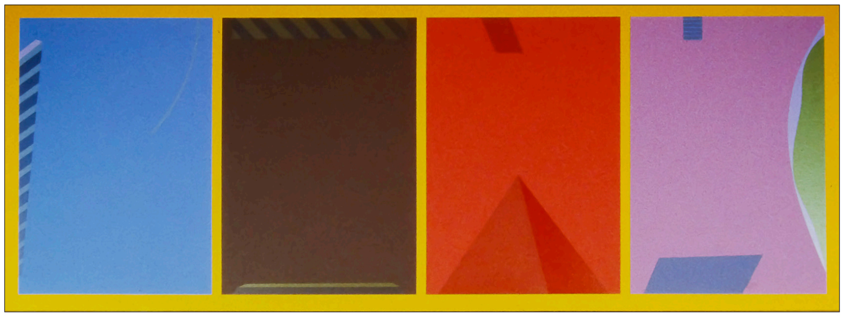




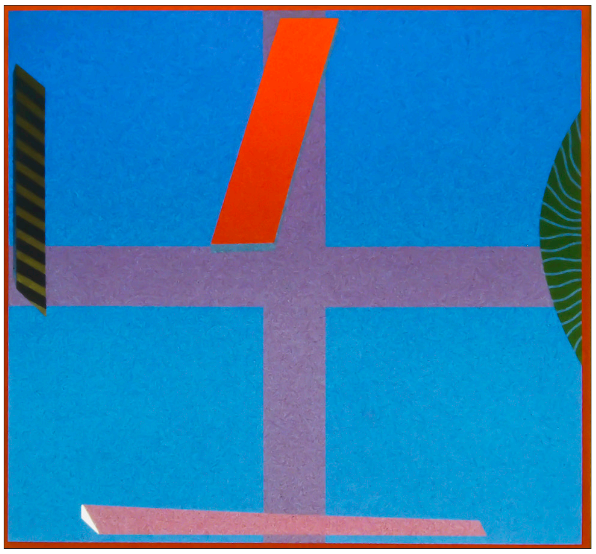
Left to right: *Four*, Untitled, unknown, *Passage*



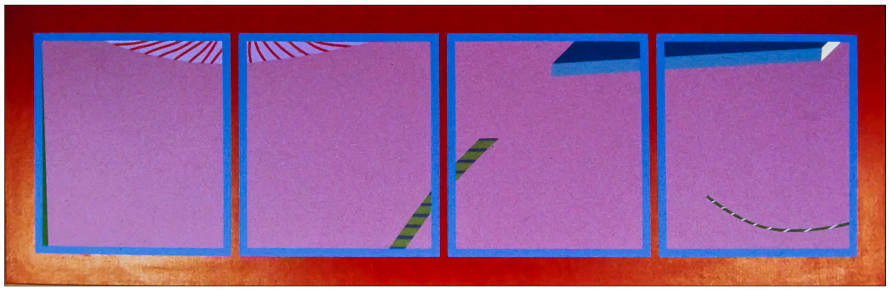
Left to right: *Passage*, Untitled (*Windows*), and *Luxor II*



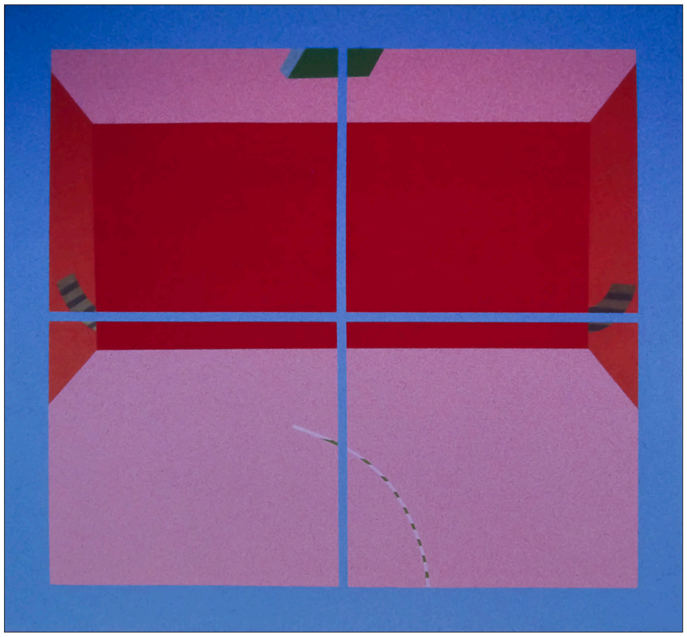
Four, 1978. Acrylic on canvas, 26 x 69 in.



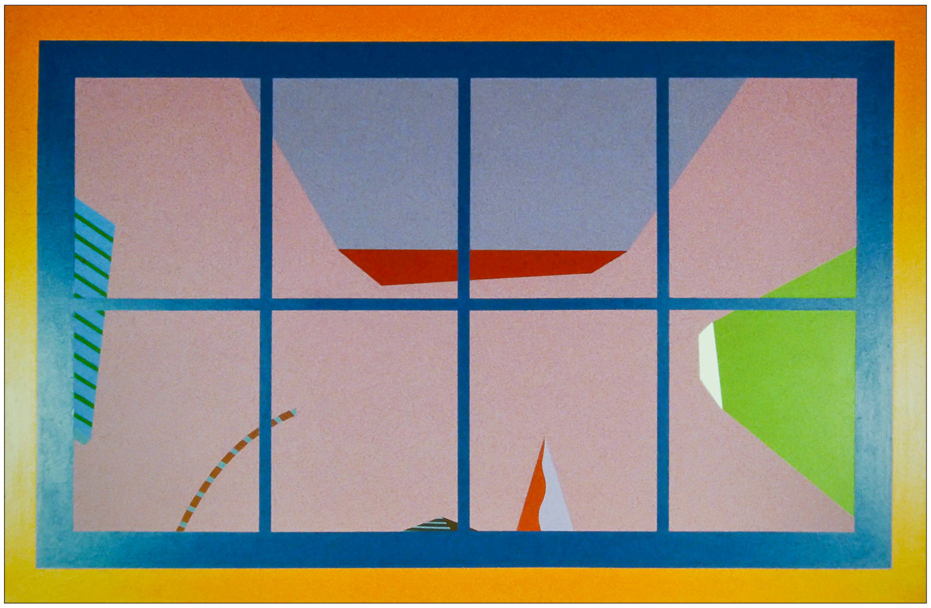
Untitled, 1978. Acrylic on canvas.



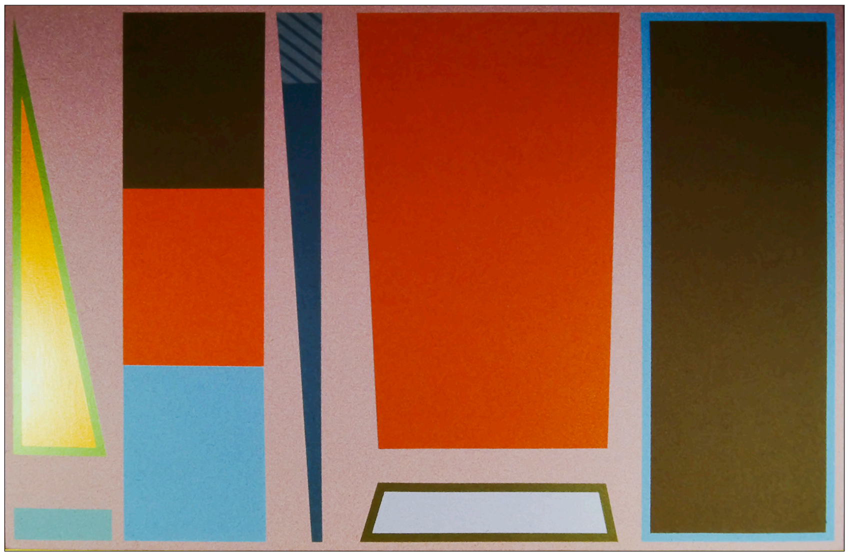
1978. Acrylic on canvas.



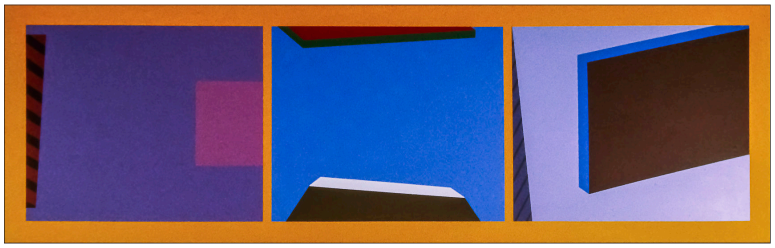
Passage, 1978. Acrylic on canvas, 52 x 56 in.



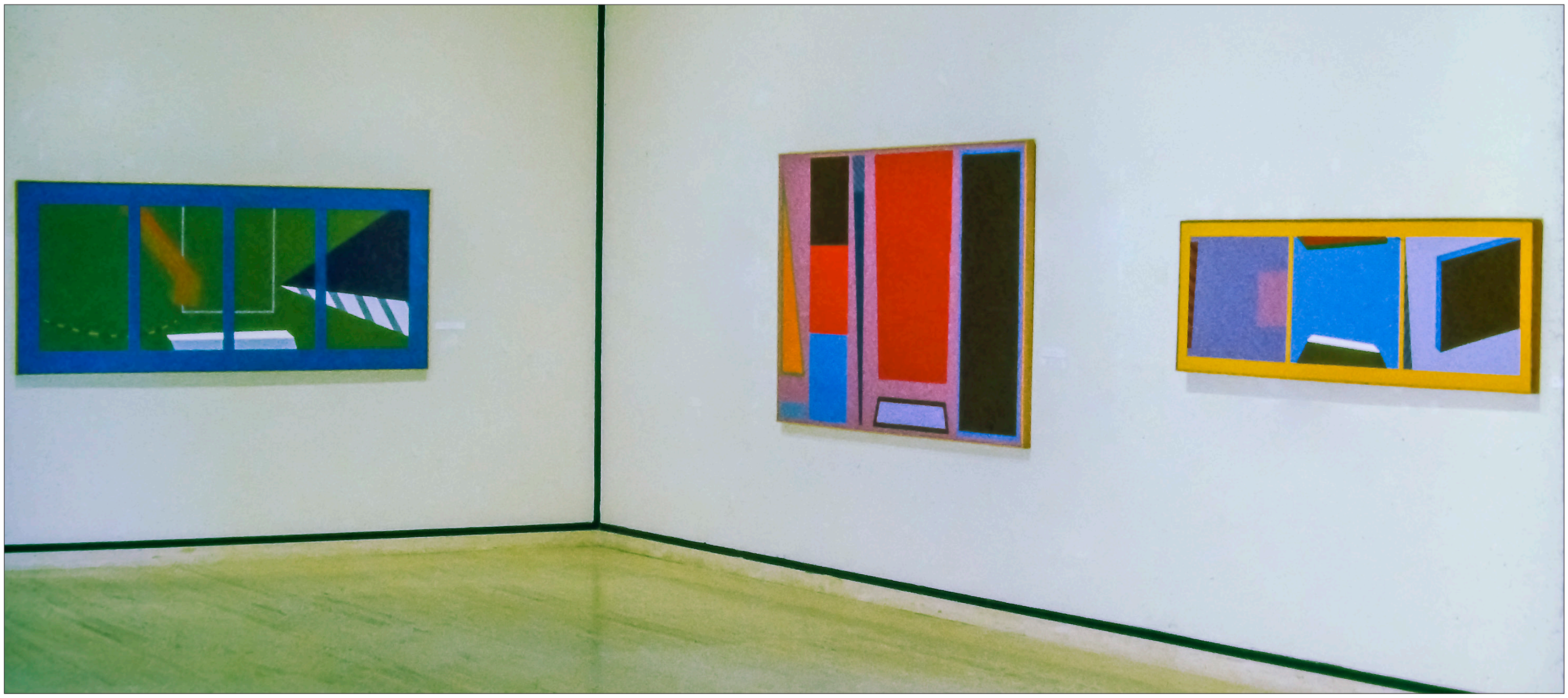
Luxor II, 1978. Acrylic on canvas, 49 x 75 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



Game, 1978. Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 74 in.



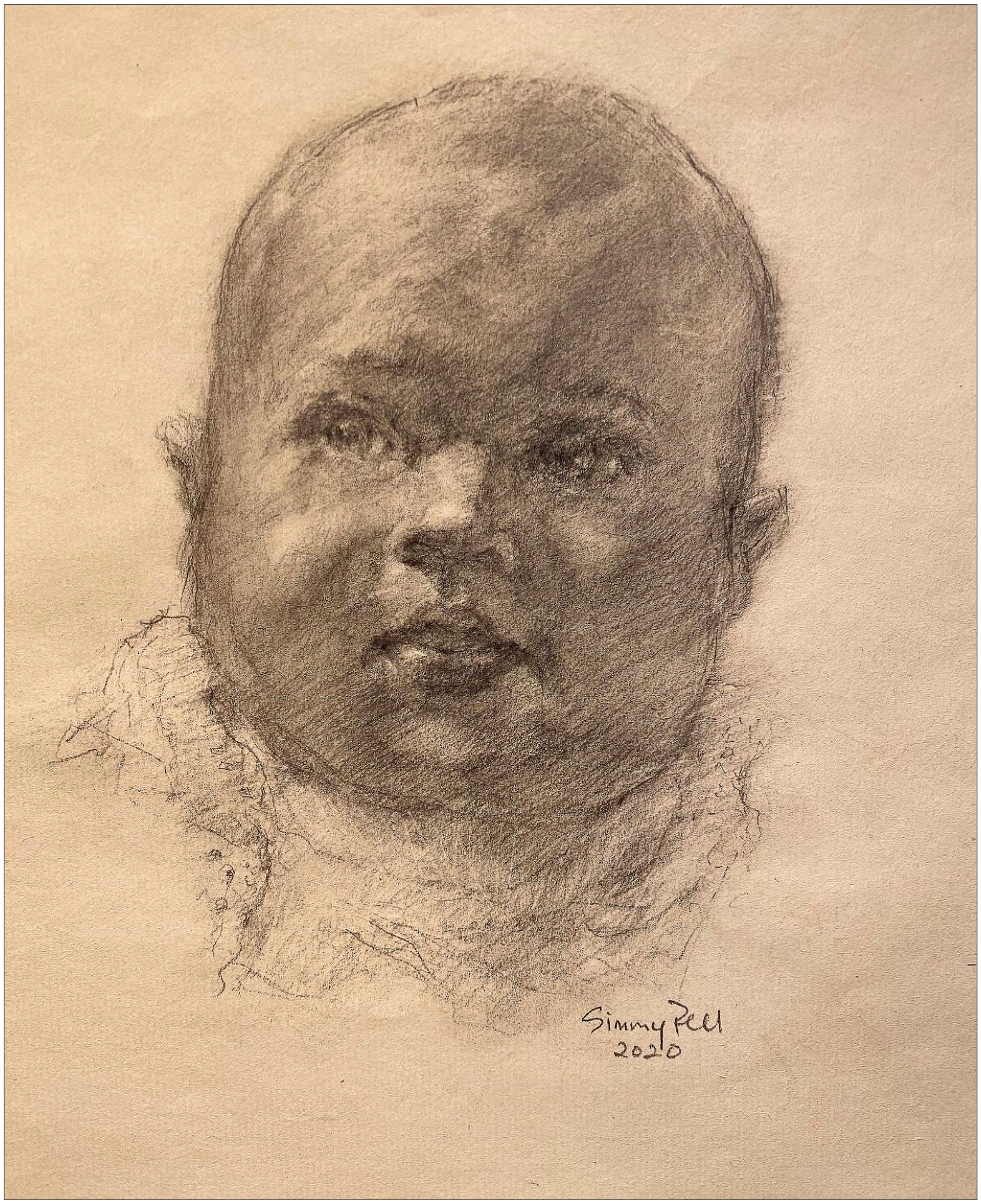
Three, 1978. Acrylic on canvas, 21 x 69 in.; see page 312.



Left to right: *Marathas*, *Game*, and *Three*

Remembrance by Simmy Pell

Simmy Pell attended the University of Pennsylvania where she received her B.A. and B.F.A. After a career as a tennis and squash pro, but mostly as a mother, she returned to painting and drawing. She uses various media employing classical drawing techniques, and her range of subjects is broad.



Simmy Pell. *My Granddaughter, Grey Pell*, 2020.
Graphite on Twinrocker handmade paper, 12 x 10 in.
Private collection, Mill Valley, CA.

I arrived in Omaha in 1974 after earning a BA and a BFA from the University of Pennsylvania and getting married. Bob Kutak, a great friend of Peter's and significant collector of his work, was my husband's boss, and he introduced me to Peter so I could continue my studies.

I am a representational artist, and Peter mentored me through classes at UNO and in my studio above Mr. Toad's in the Old Market. He did not pull punches when critiquing my work and always encouraged me to pursue my fascination with human anatomy and classical figure drawing.

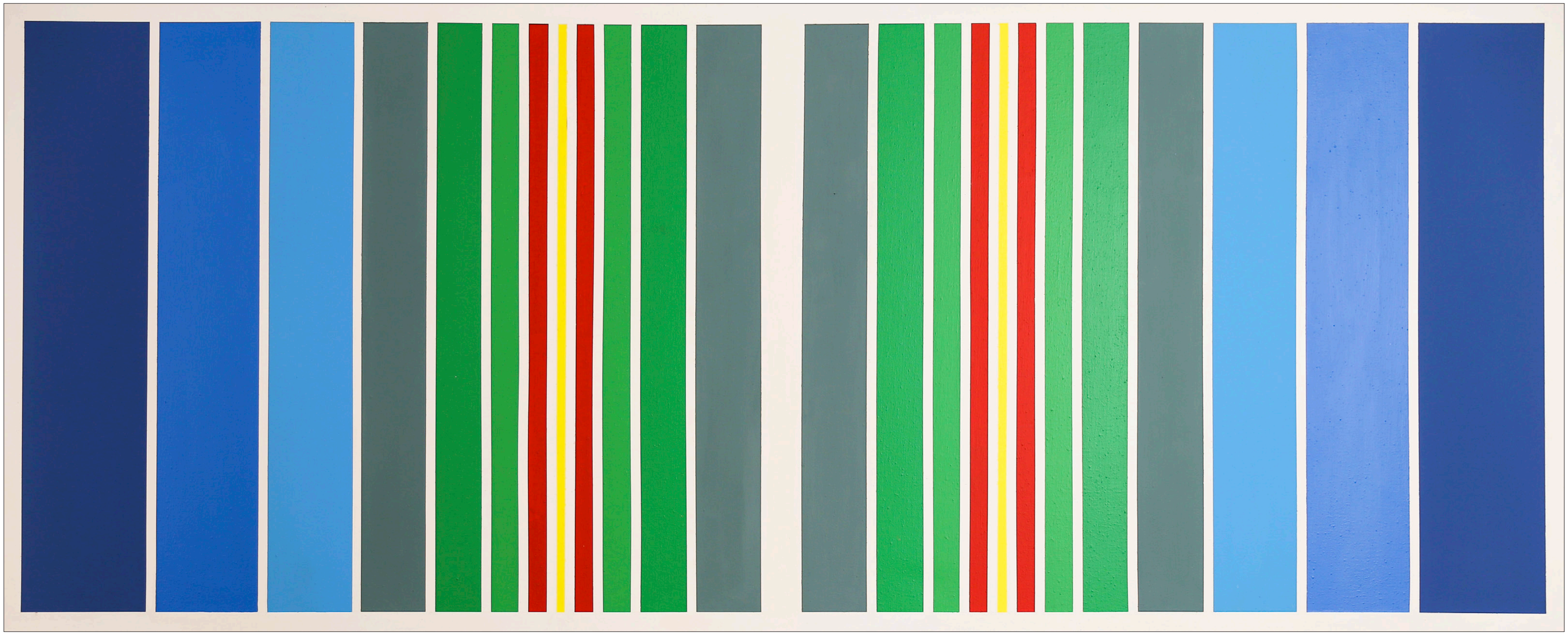
One assignment was to contact leading 20th century artists for additional guidance. This was decades before the Internet and, amazingly, I reached Robert Motherwell by phone and we had an inspiring conversation.

My husband's job would move us to Washington in 1979, but Peter's inspiration has kept me at my easel into my 70s.

—Simmy Pell

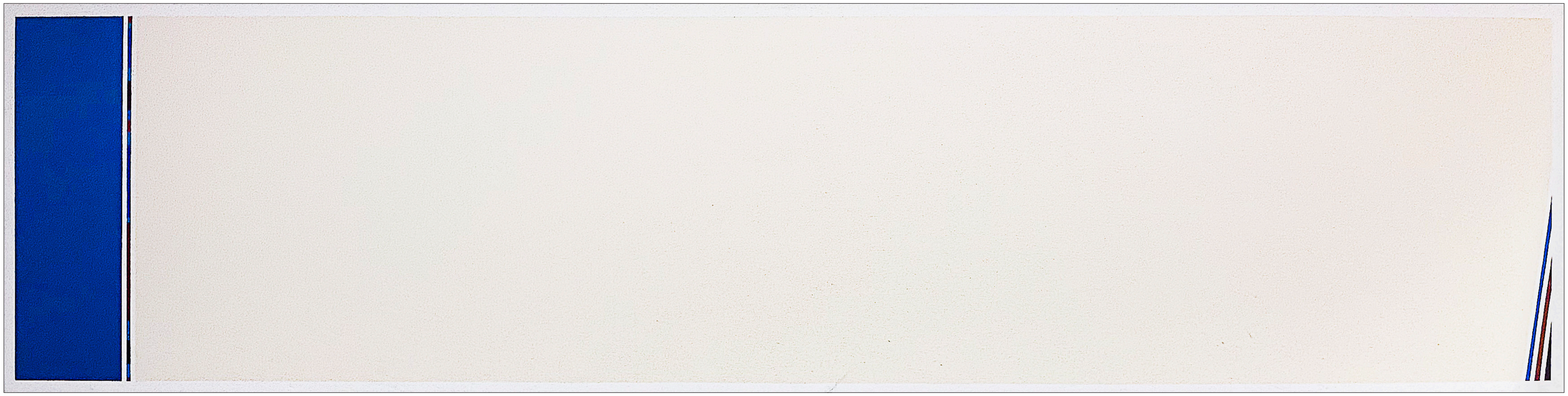
Long Paintings: 1970s to 1997

What counts as a "long painting"? A painting that is much longer than it is tall. It's a little arbitrary. But I wanted to feature these paintings in a special section so that I could devote more space to their, well, length. Only high-quality photos appear.



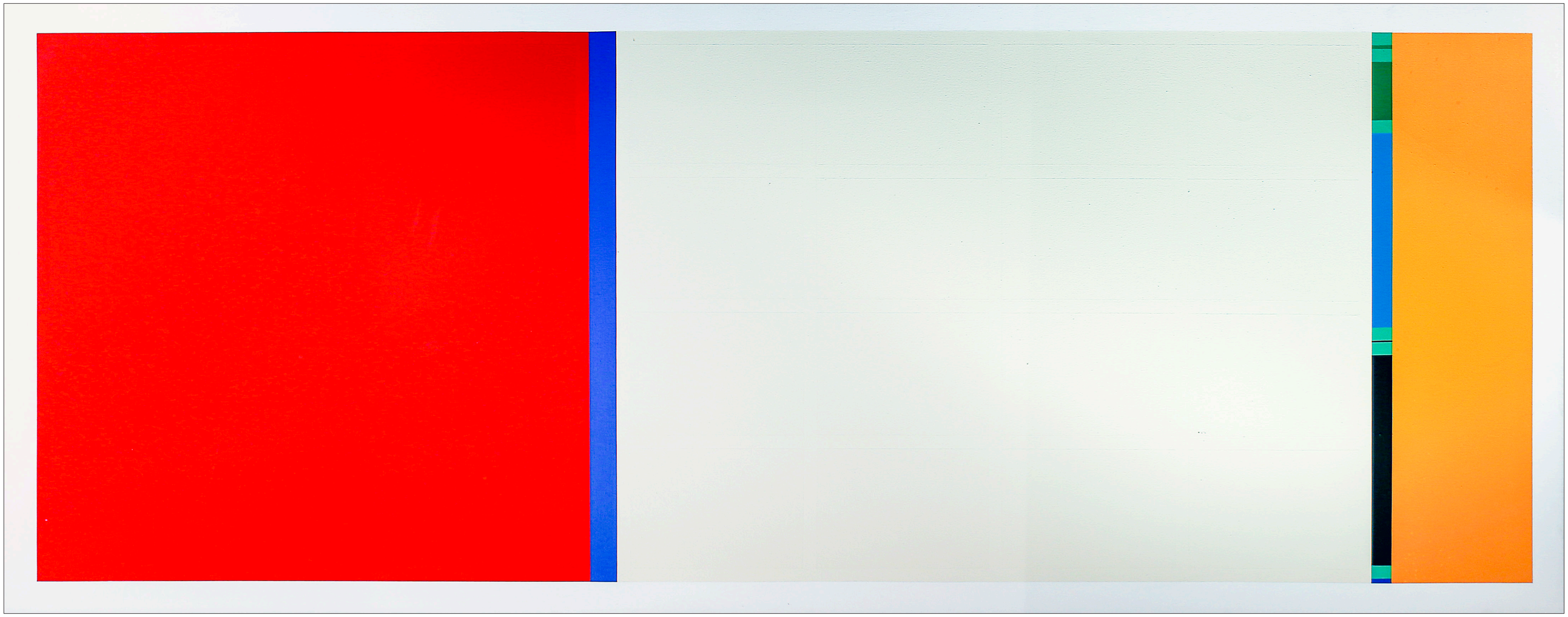
Untitled

1970–2. Acrylic on canvas, 34 x 84 in.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.



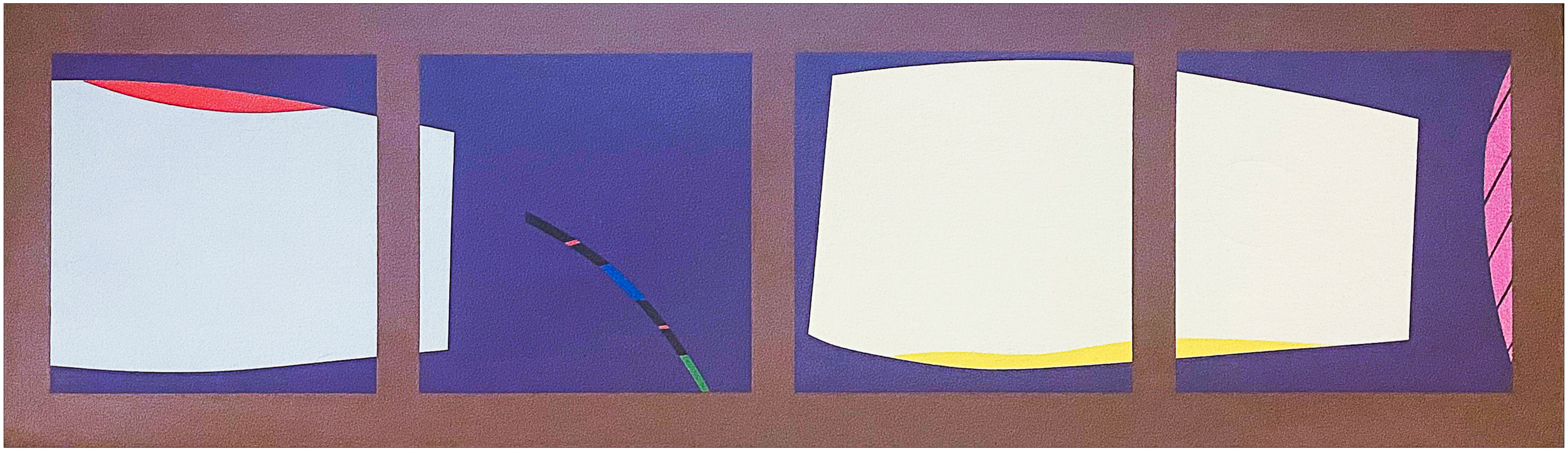
Untitled

1973. Acrylic on canvas, 22 x 87 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



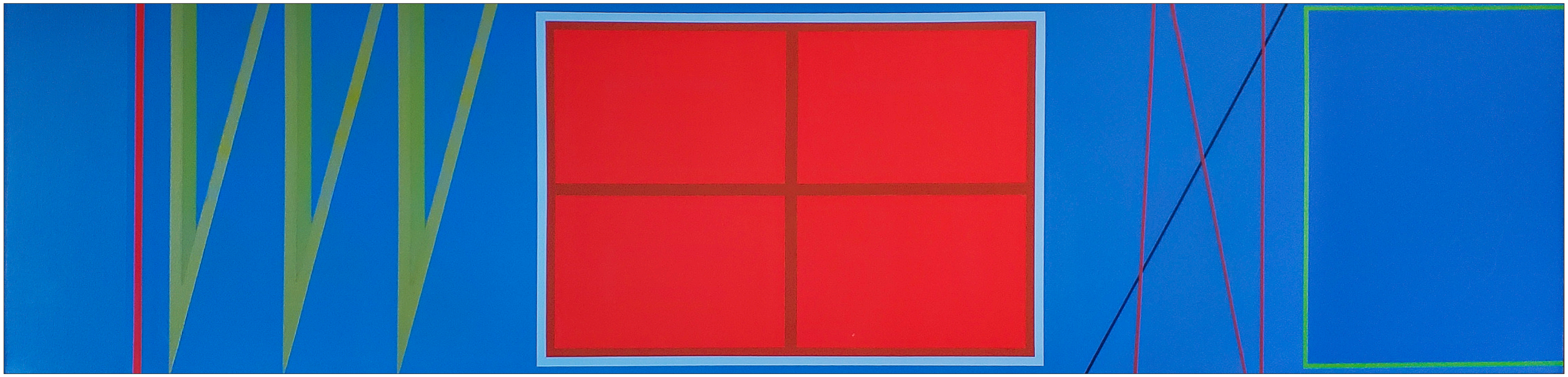
Untitled

1973. Acrylic on canvas, 10 x 36 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



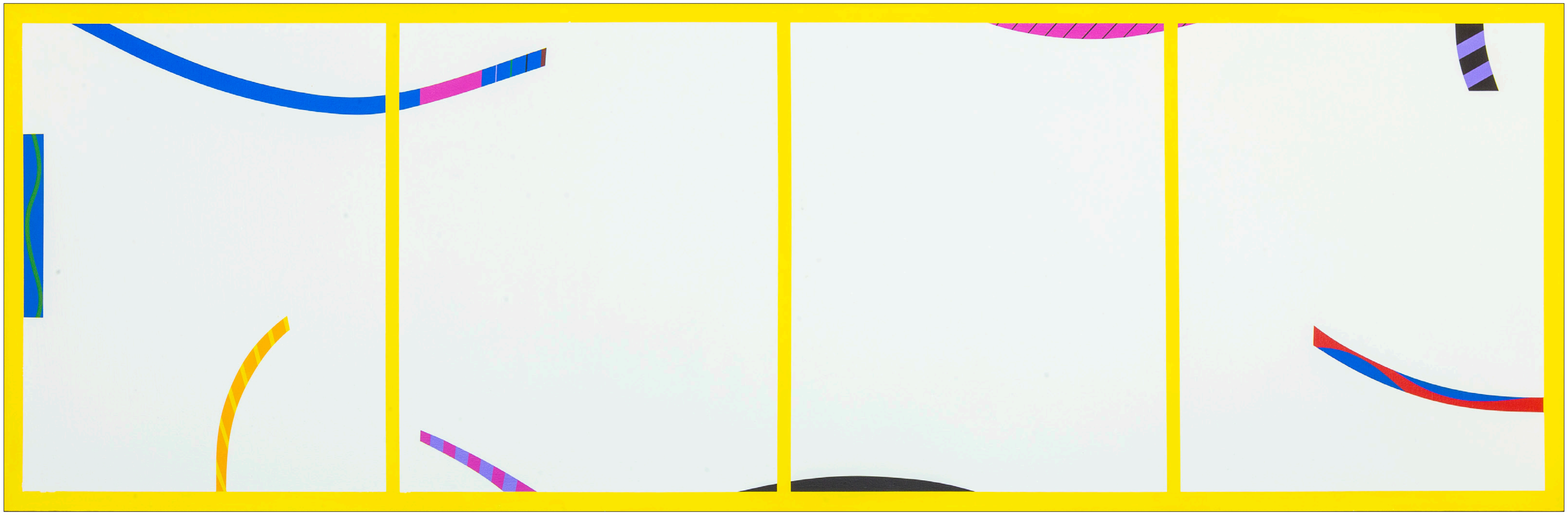
Untitled

1973. Acrylic on canvas, 9 x 28.5 in.
Exhibited at the Stuhr Museum, 1975. Collection of Kutak Rock.



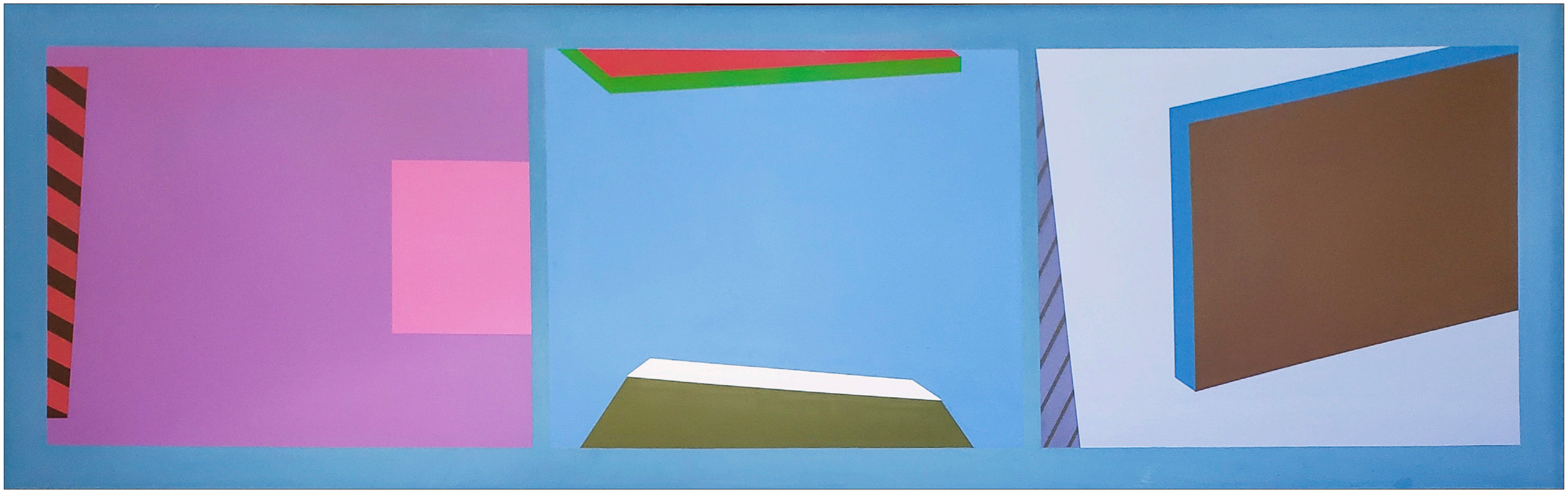
Red Window

1974. Acrylic on canvas, 23 x 95 in.
Collection of Steve and Annette Huff. Photograph by Alec Paul.



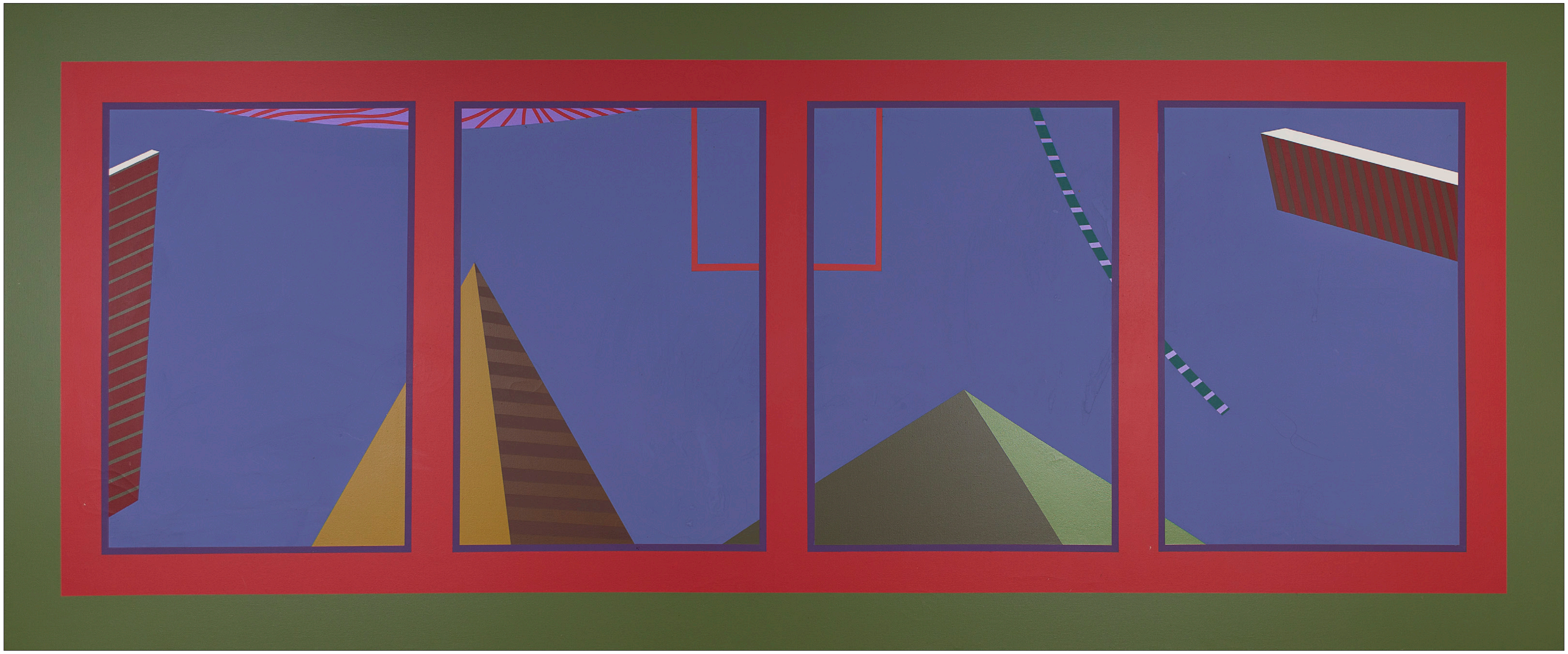
Untitled

1975. Acrylic on canvas, 28.5 x 86 in.
Exhibited at the Stuhr Museum, 1975. Collection of Joan C. Hill.



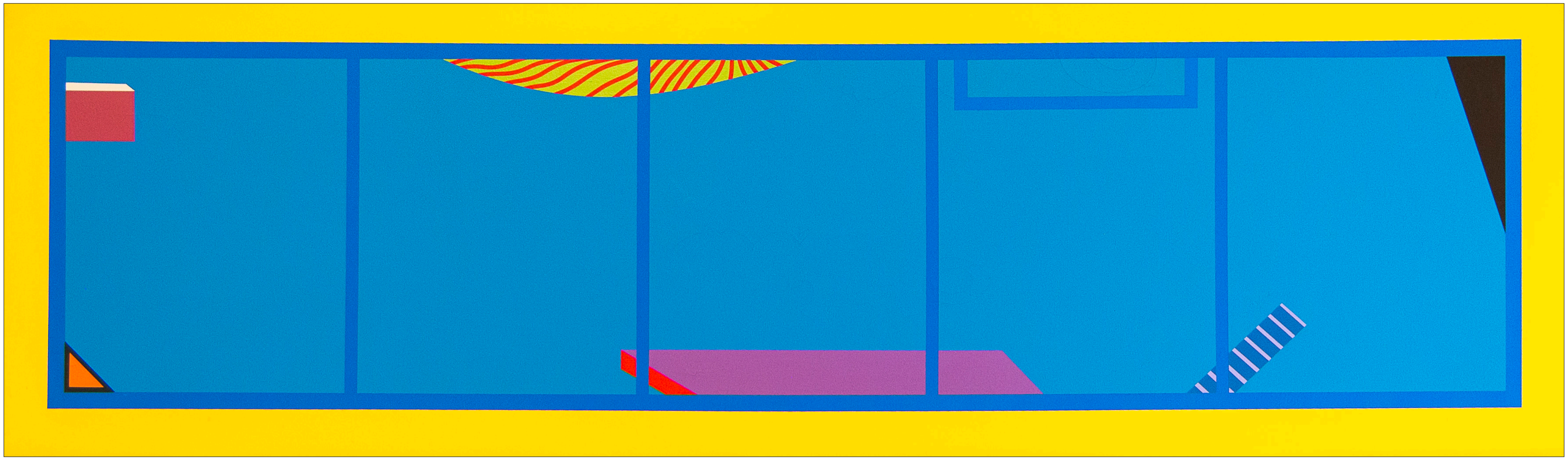
Three

1978. Acrylic on canvas, 22 x 69 in.
Collection of Steve and Annette Huff. Photograph by Alec Paul.



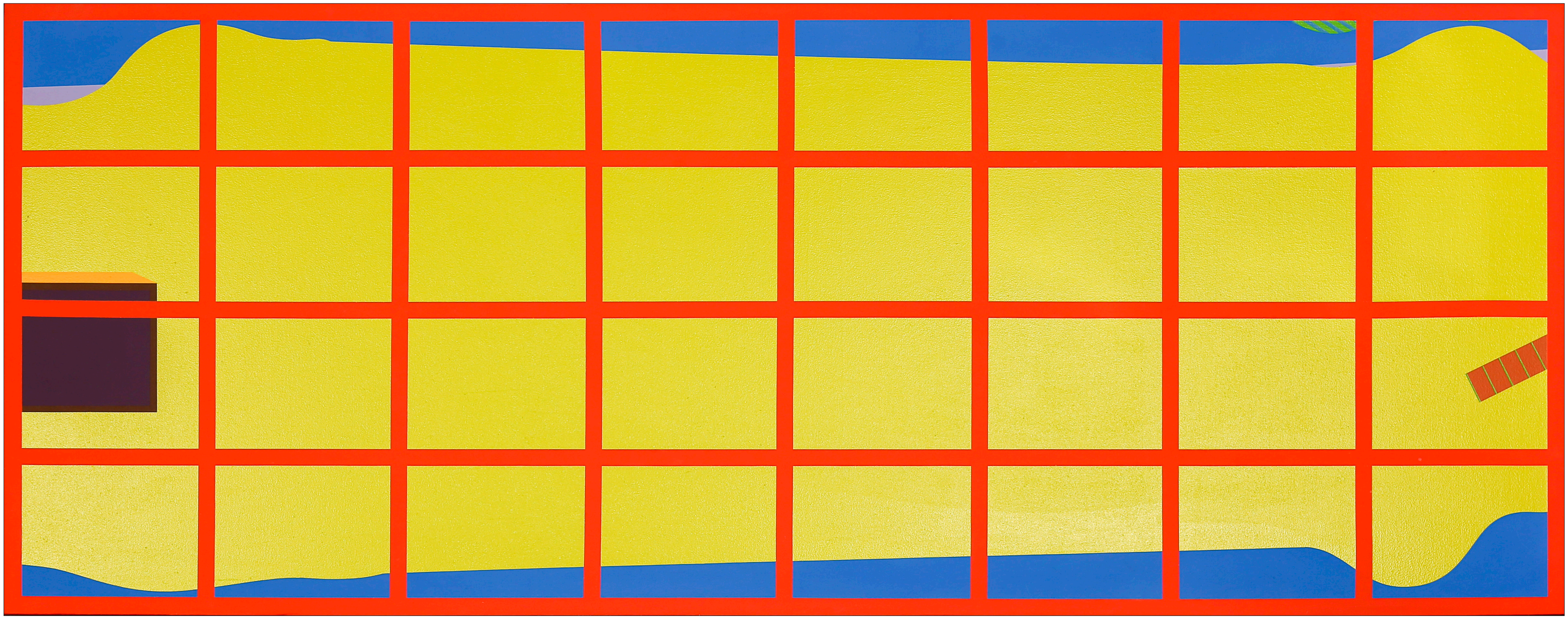
Two Pyramids

1977. Acrylic on canvas, 49 x 116 in.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.



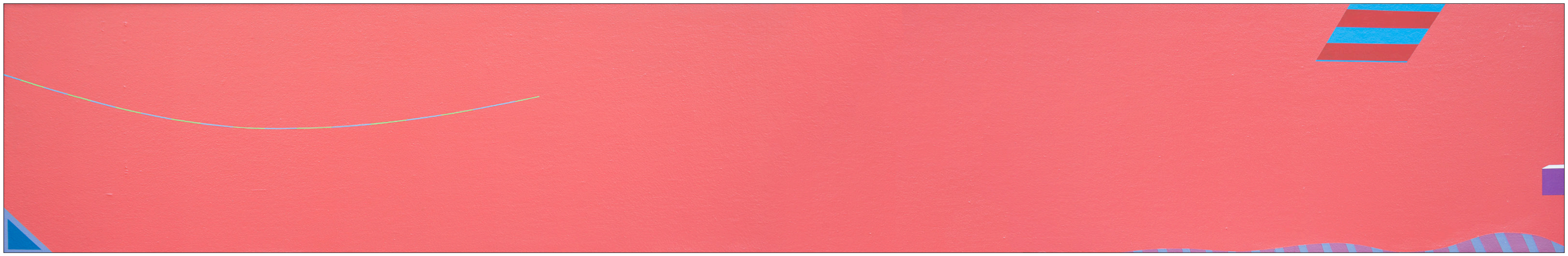
Riyadh

1980. Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 94 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.



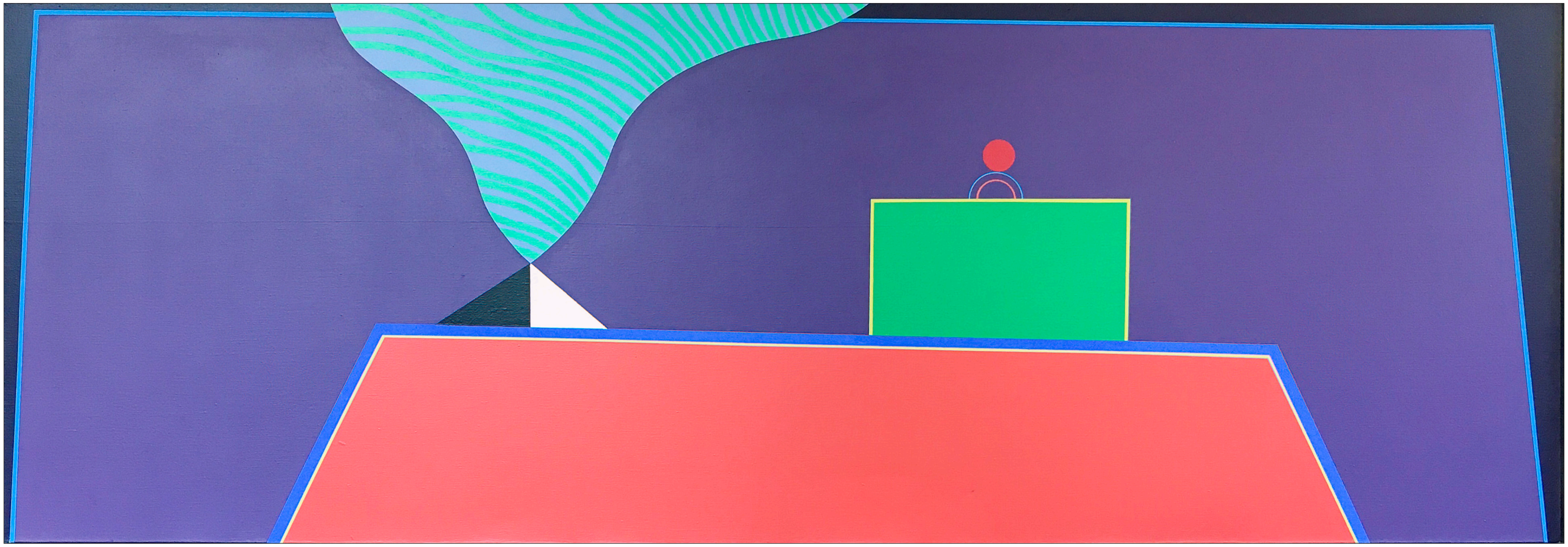
Cathay

1982. Acrylic on canvas, 29 x 73 in.
Collection of Stephen and Leslie Hill.



Saran

1983. Acrylic on canvas, 12 x 72 in.
Collection of David and Beverly Freeman.



Balanced Wind

1997. Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 58 in.
Collection of Kelly (Siragusa) Adams.

Grids and Grandkids: 1980 to 1984

The years 1980 to 1984 brought two significant losses for Dad.

In October 1981 his own father, Lyman Gilman Hill, Sr, died. Recall that Lyman's wife, Helen, had died in 1961 at age 56. Lyman was 64 when she died, and he lived another 20 years without her. He stayed in Detroit until 1972, then moved to Omaha to an apartment roughly a mile from my parents' home. He came to dinner every Thursday and Sunday, always in a tie. Apparently Lyman had been a fairly formal person most of his life; once in Omaha he loosened up a bit. It's good to think that my grandfather's last years were comfortable and enjoyable, and that he and my father grew closer.

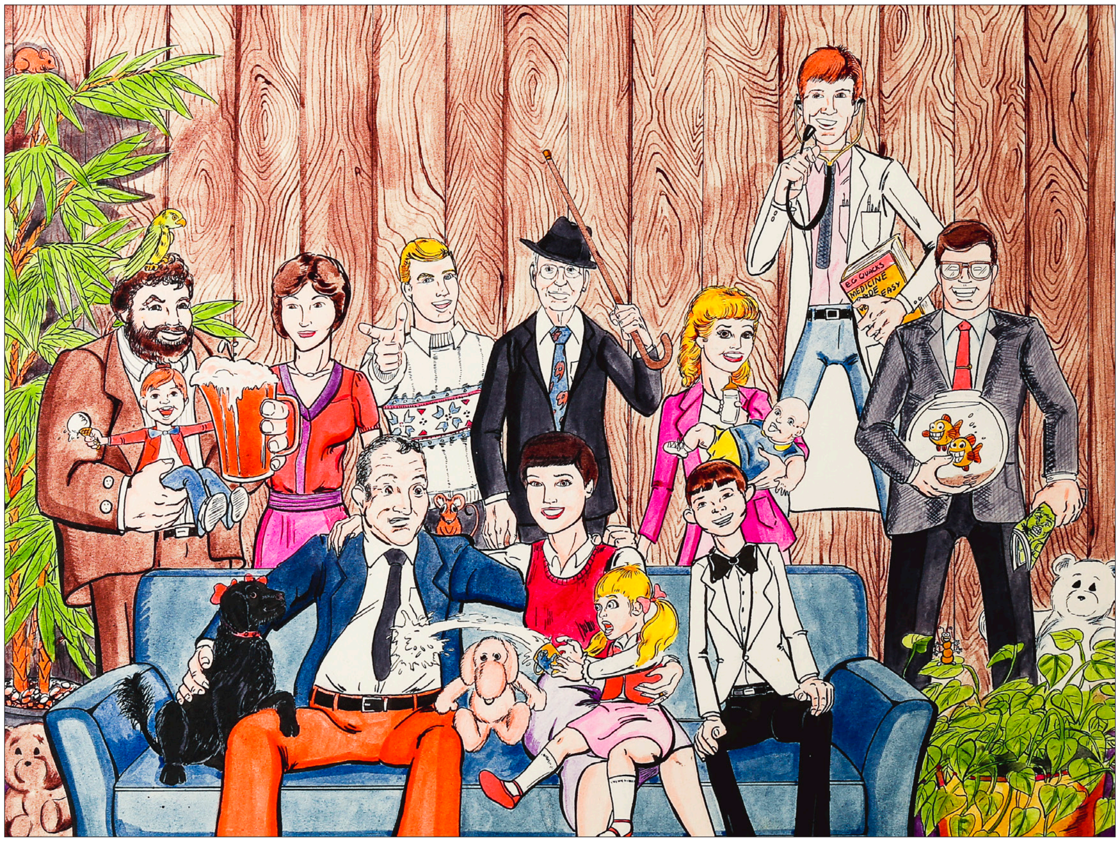
The second loss was Bob Kutak, who died in January 1983 at age 50. It was sudden—apparently a heart attack—and my father was with him at the time. Abruptly my father had lost one of his closest friends, and in a particularly traumatic way. Other details are in a *World-Herald* article I reproduce on page 348.

Artistically, my dad moved past pyramids. They would reappear in his work for the rest of his life but never in the same way. Instead, tight grids are common from 1980 to 1982. Most of these function not as windows onto illusory space but as shape-constricting nets. Trapped just behind the grids are the usual players: obdurate pyramids, side-clinging boxes and trapezoids, sinewy lines, gentle waves, and stripy mounds.

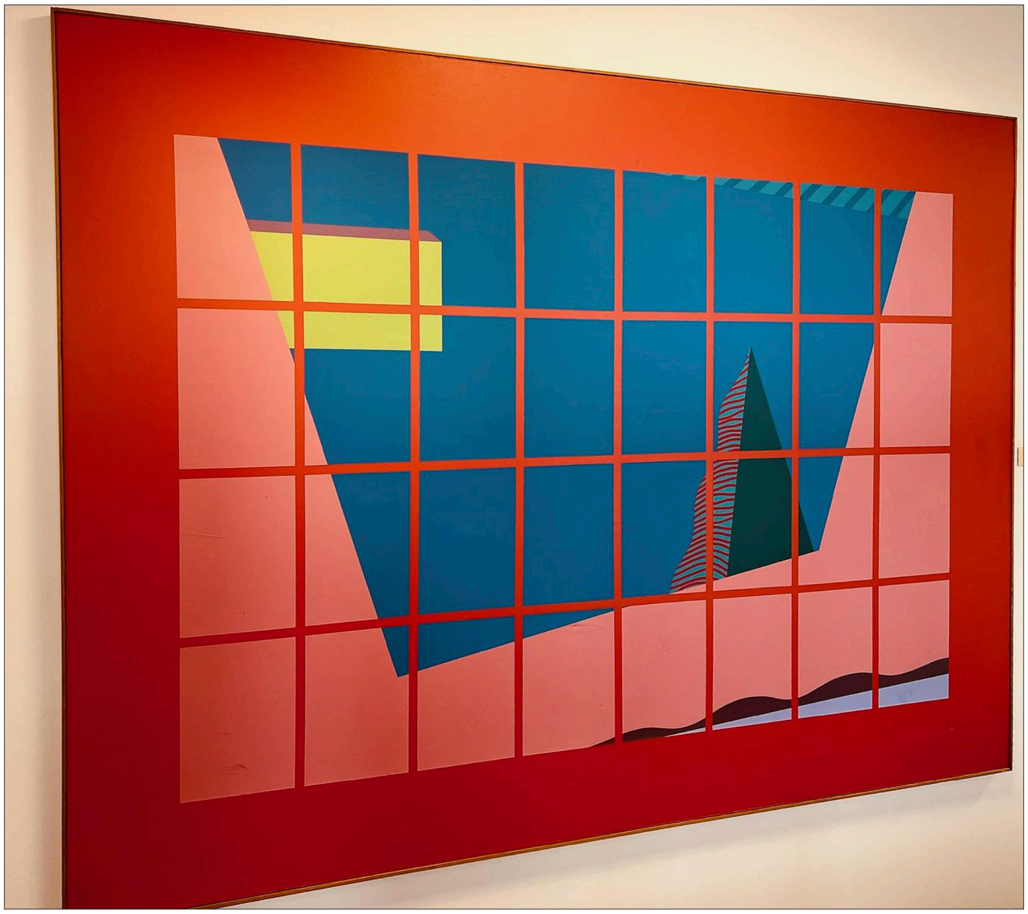
I'll be candid: This is my least favorite period of my father's art. For me the grids are claustrophobic and the colors irritating. As an artist, he had every right to follow this path; as a viewer, I have every right to be glad it lasted only a few years.

In 1982 the grids opened up into large flat fields edged by waves, boxes, and striped lines. These I appreciate far more; despite their characteristically bold colors, they are relaxing—not as contemplative as the Box paintings, but not at all grating like the grids. And he was painting large during these years. Pay attention to the dimensions given below the paintings. I'm forced to keep most of these images small because I only have digitized slides and they would look terrible reproduced larger. Just hold in your mind that many of them are about six feet tall and eight feet long, larger than a queen-sized bed. Such paintings were intended to dominate entire walls, even entire rooms, and could only fit comfortably in offices or the homes of the reasonably wealthy.

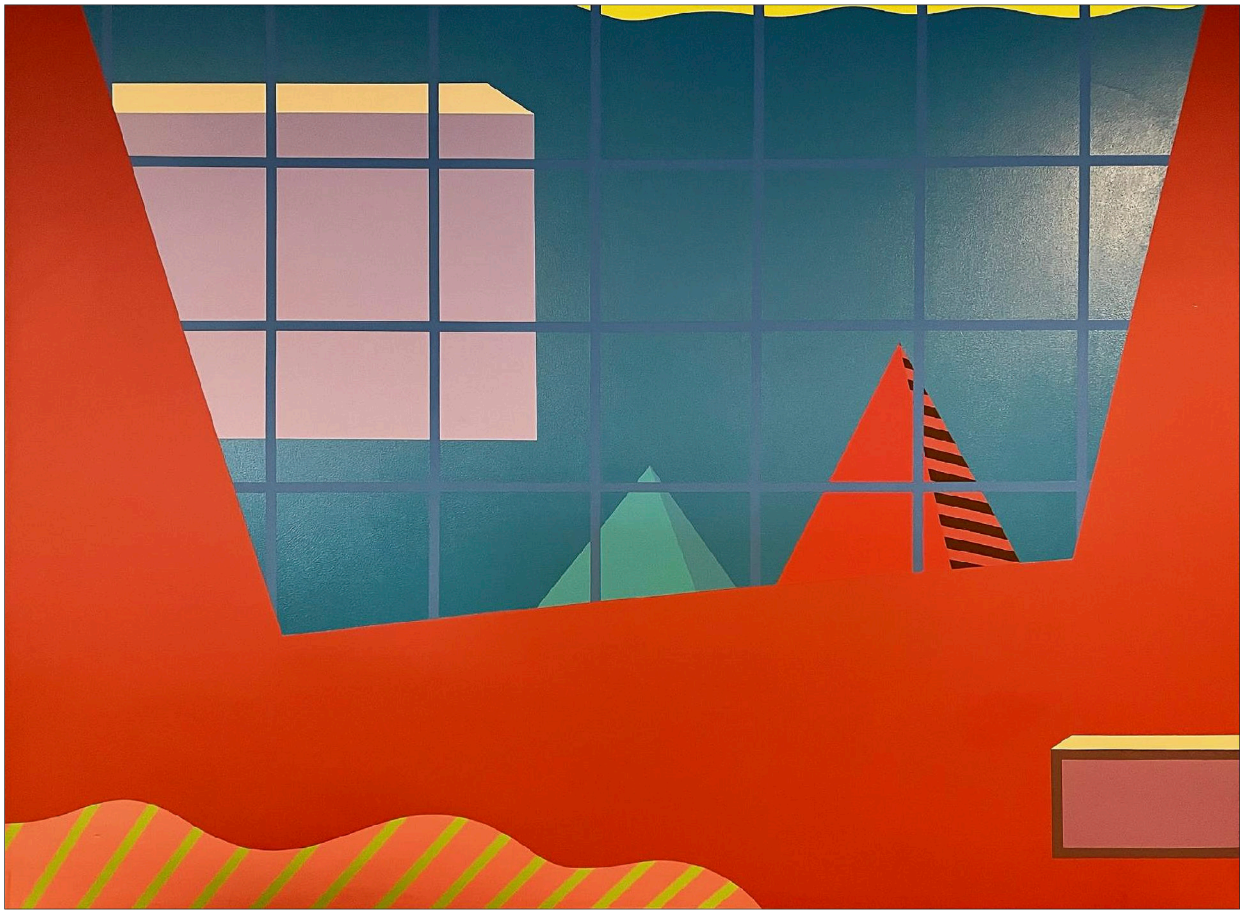
Despite the tragedies, everything else in my parents' lives was going well. Having produced their last children, my father and mother began welcoming grandchildren, two of whom are pictured below.



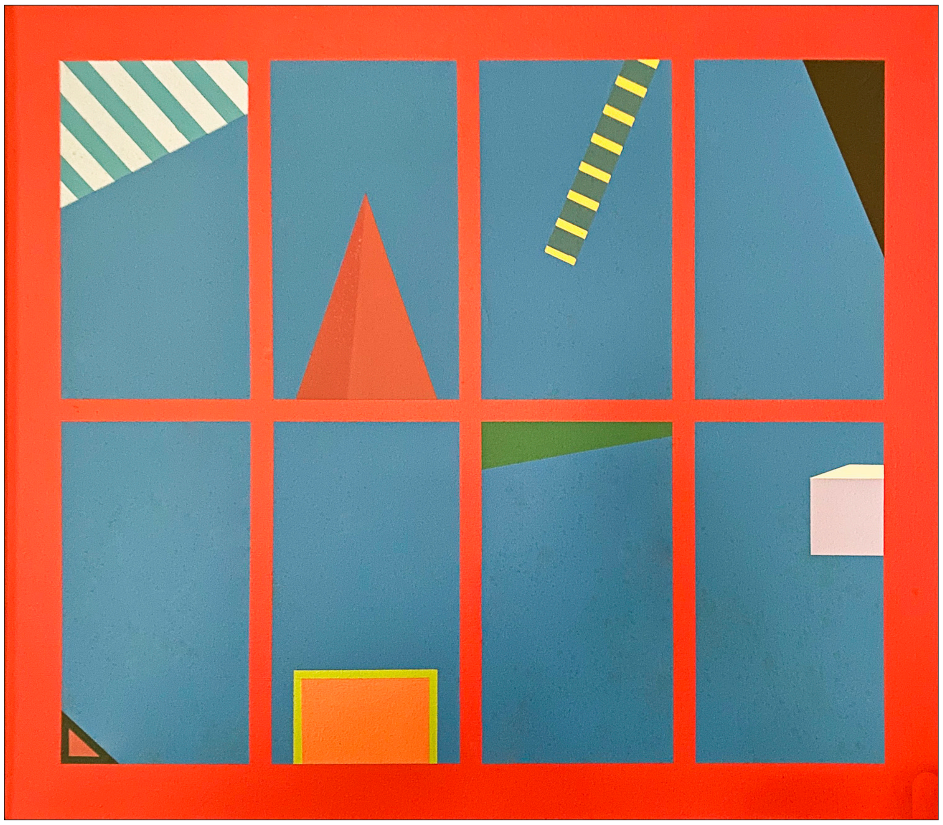
Back, L to R: Jim, "Little" Steve, Rhonda, Peter Jr., Lyman, Lindsey, T. J., Todd, Stephen
Front, L to R: Muffin, Peter Sr., Ellie Mutt, Jody, Mary, Rob
Drawing by Stephen C. Hill.



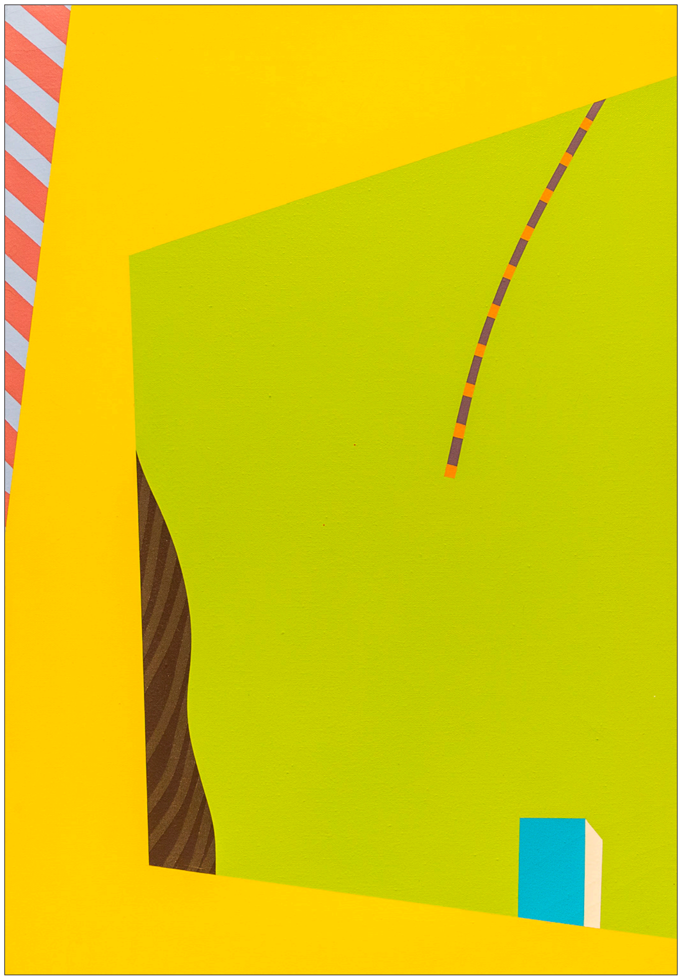
Untitled, 1980.
Acrylic on canvas, 68 x 91.5 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock, Denver Offices.



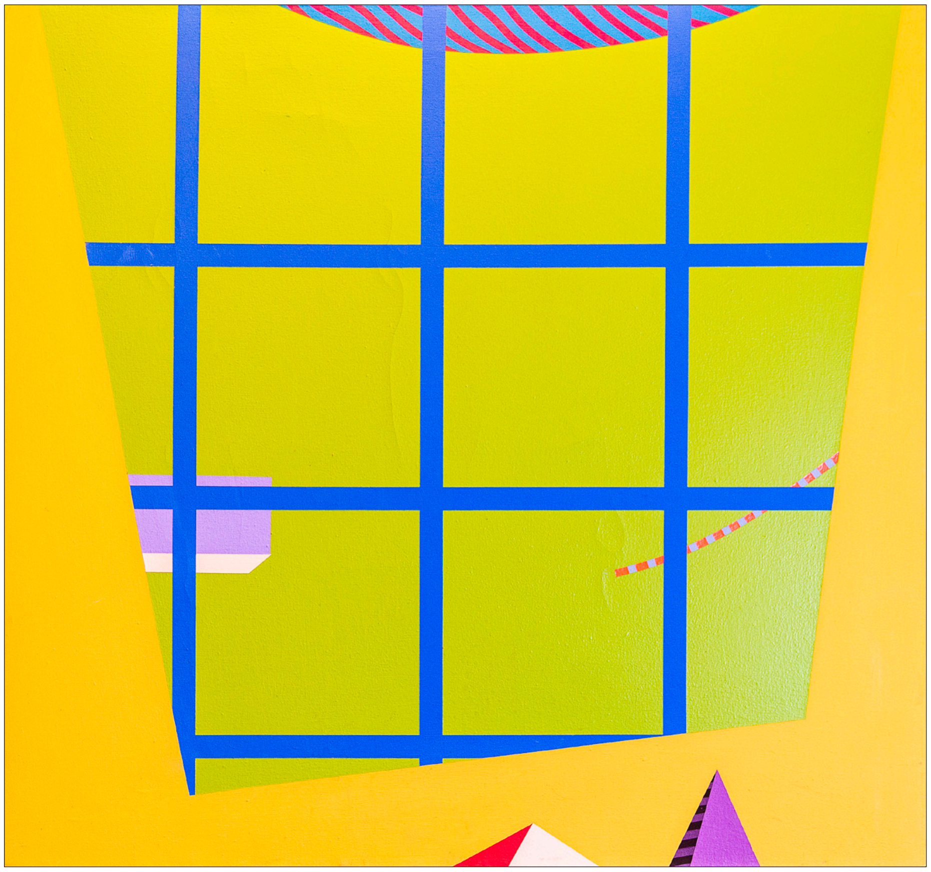
Untitled, 1980.
Acrylic on canvas, 76.5 x 91.5 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock, Denver.



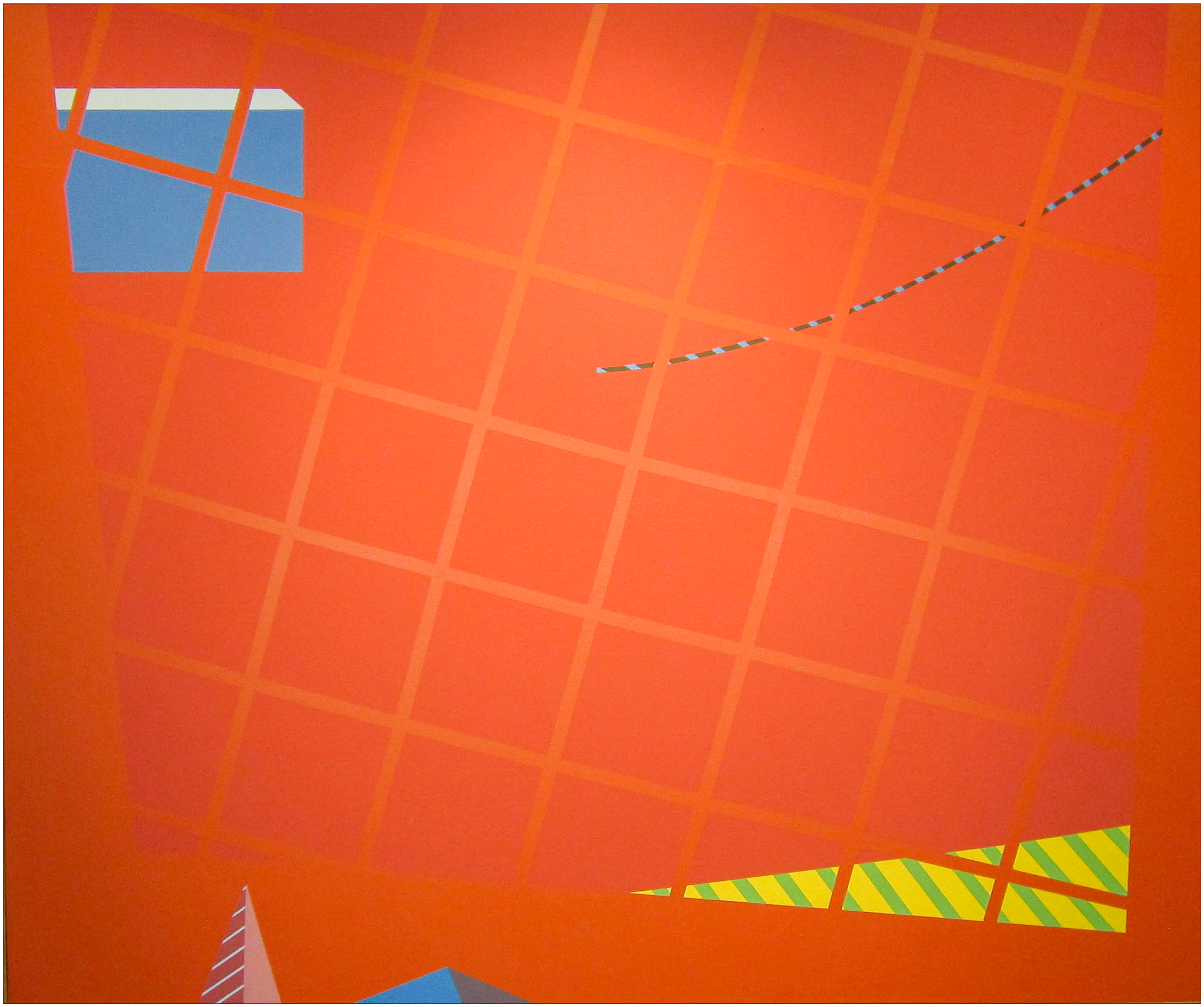
Untitled, 1980. Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 32 in. Collection of Michael Rock.



Yellow Field, 1980.
Acrylic on canvas, 26 x 18 in.
Collection of David and Tracy Wintroub.

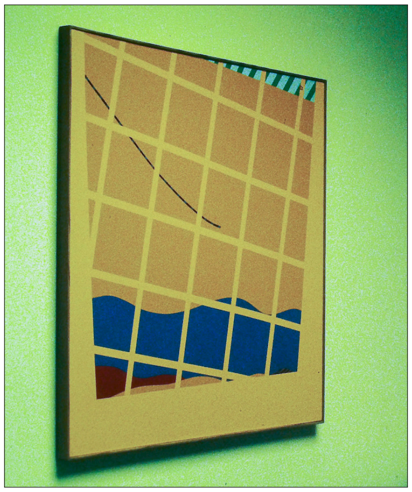


Untitled, 1980. Acrylic on canvas, 30 x 28 in.
Collection of Dana and Scott Porter.

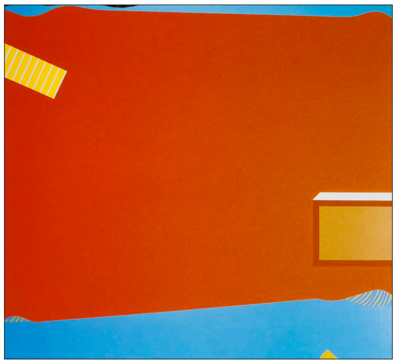


Untitled

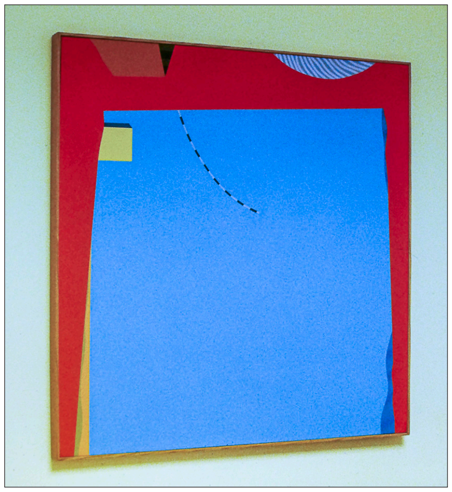
1981. Acrylic on canvas, 58 x 69 in.
Collection of the Museum of Nebraska Art.



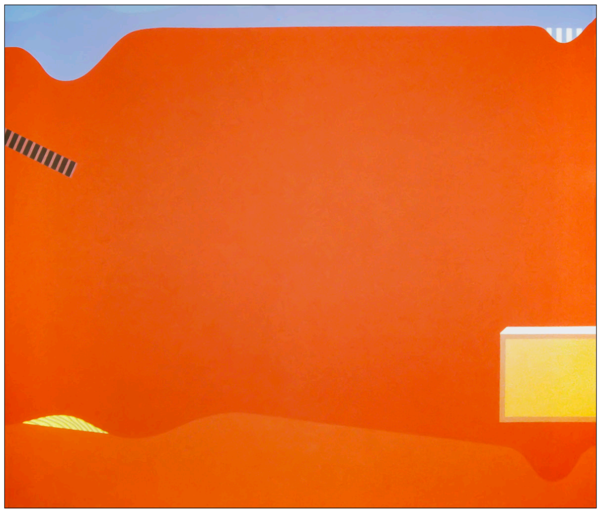
Untitled, 1981. Acrylic, 38 x 38 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



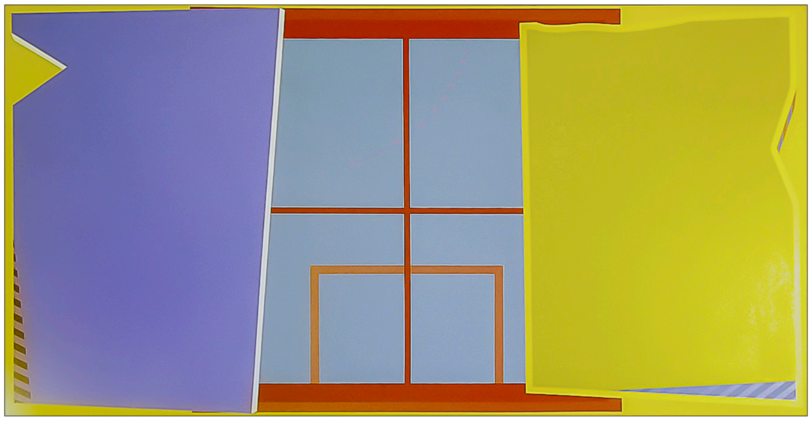
Cathay, 1981.
Acrylic on canvas, 44 x 48 in.



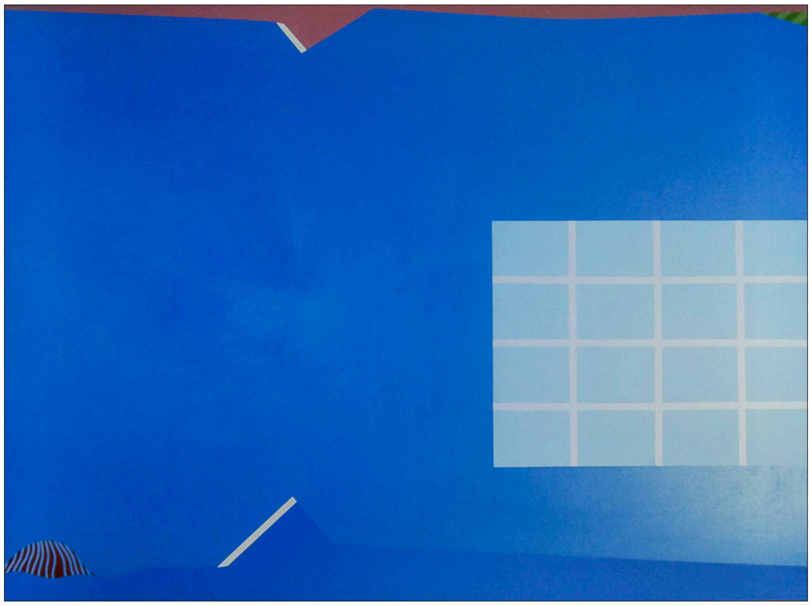
Untitled, 1981. Acrylic, 38 x 38 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



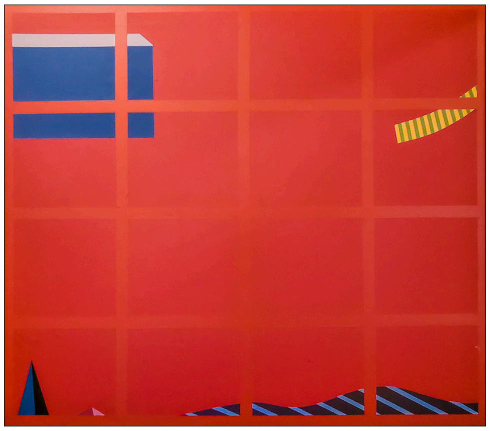
Untitled, 1981. Acrylic on canvas, 69.5 x 82 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



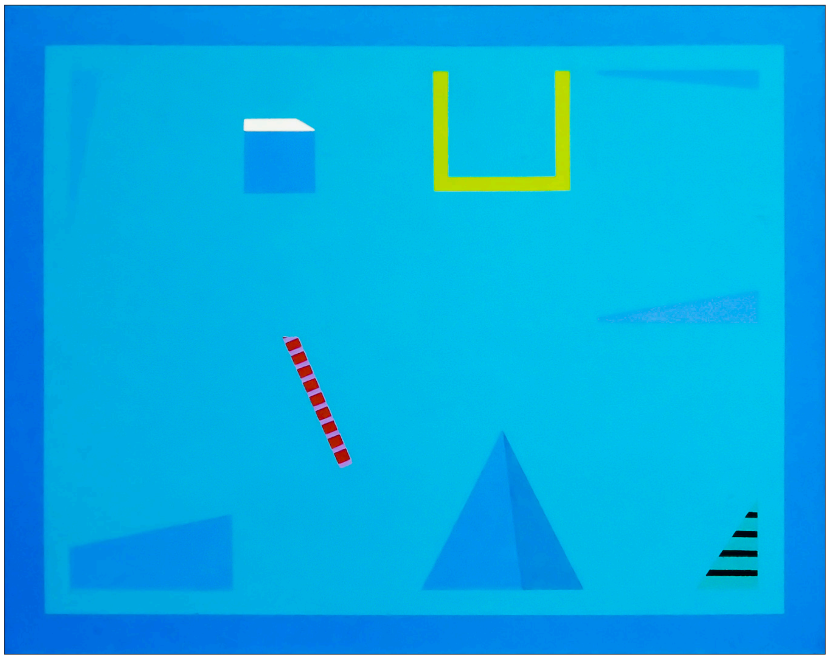
Dead Center, 1980. Acrylic on canvas, 54 x 92 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



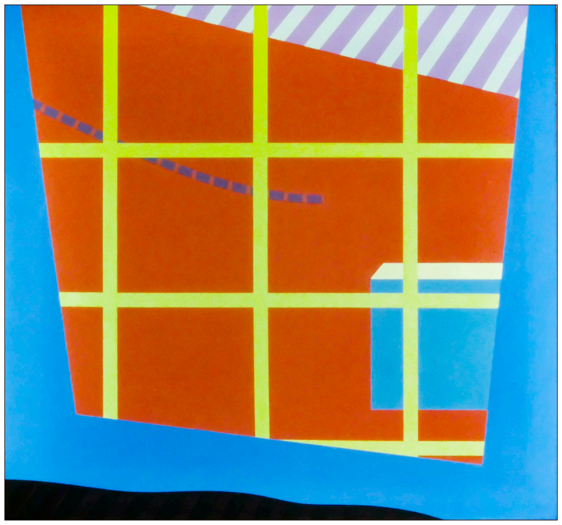
Untitled, 1980. Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 92 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



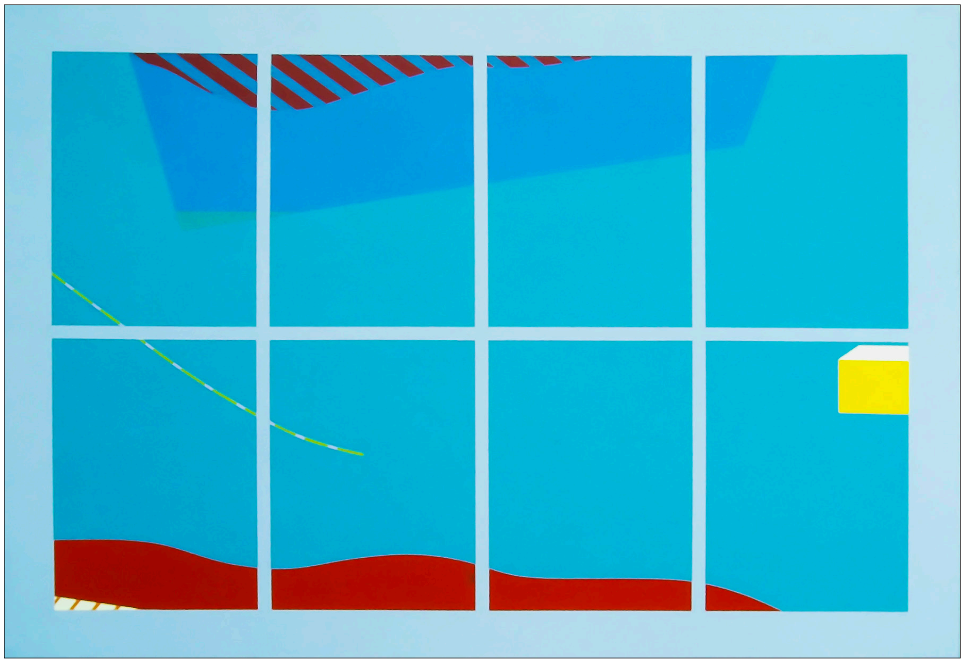
Red on Red, 1981. Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 32 in.
Collection of Charles and Kathy Campbell.



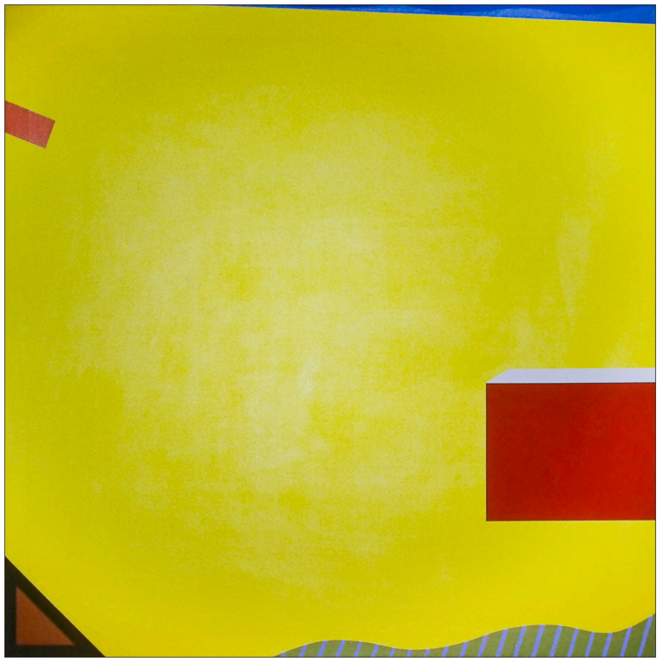
Kadesh, 1980. Acrylic on canvas, 38 x 47 in.



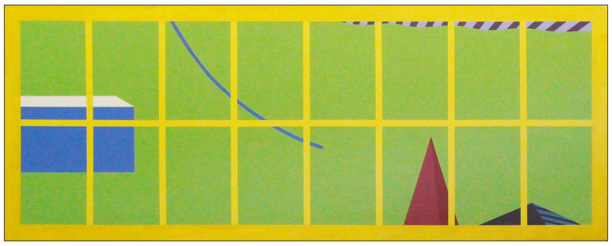
Untitled, 1980.
Acrylic on canvas, 30 x 28 in.



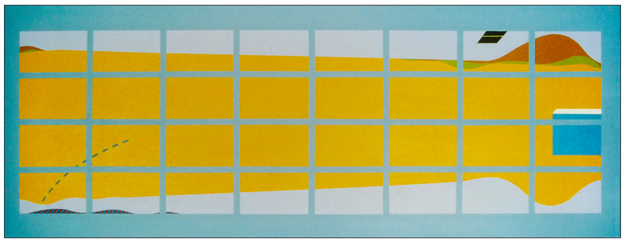
Untitled, 1980. Acrylic on canvas, 38 x 55 in.



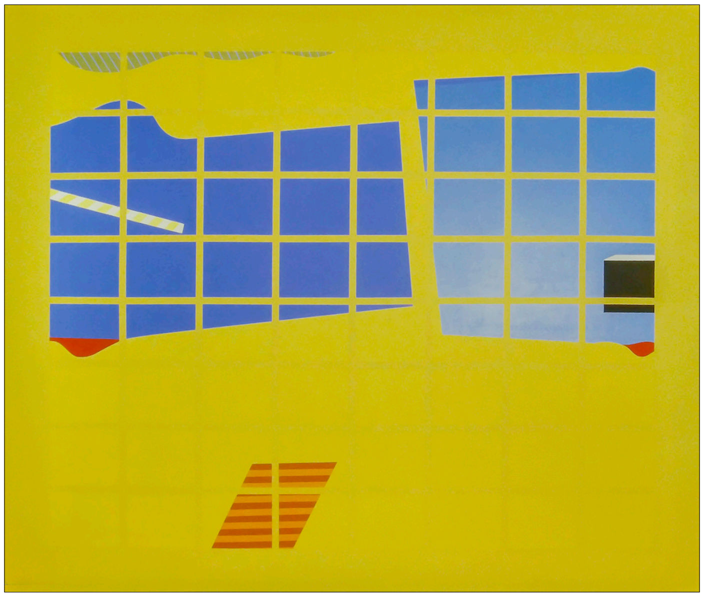
Untitled, 1981. Acrylic on canvas, 38 x 38 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



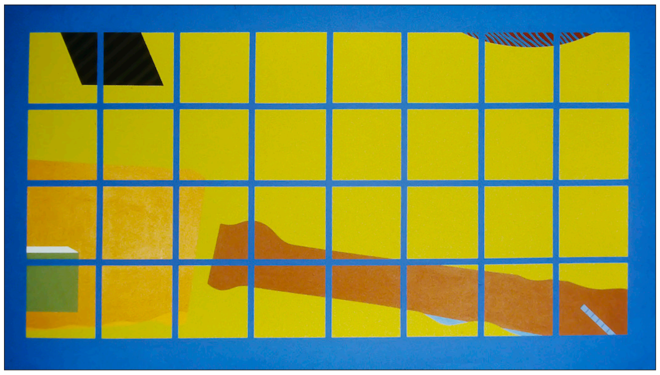
Rostra, 1981. Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 72.5 in.
Collection of the Sousley family.



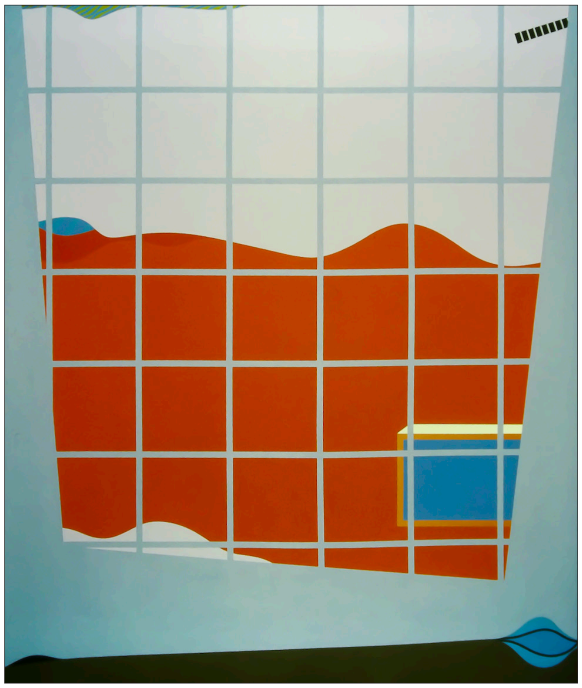
Isis, 1981. Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 76 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



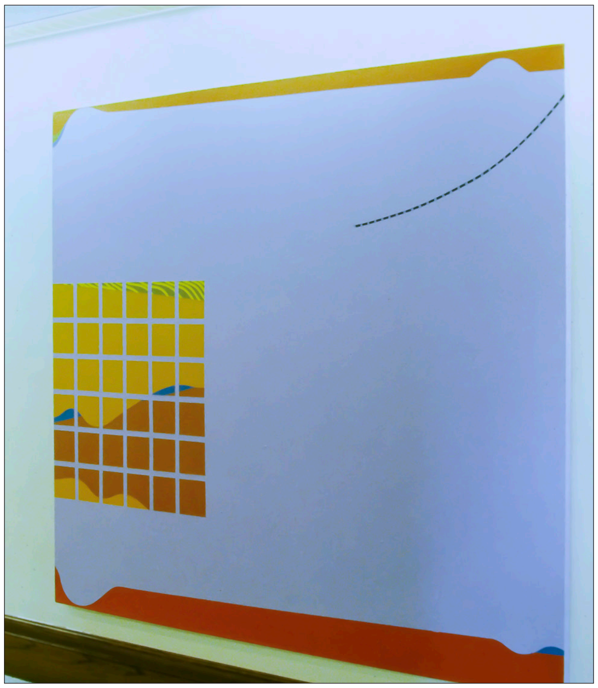
Cohort, 1981. Acrylic on canvas, 70 x 82 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



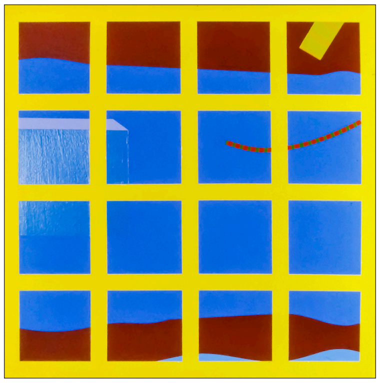
Breakout, 1981. Acrylic on canvas, 44 x 79 in.



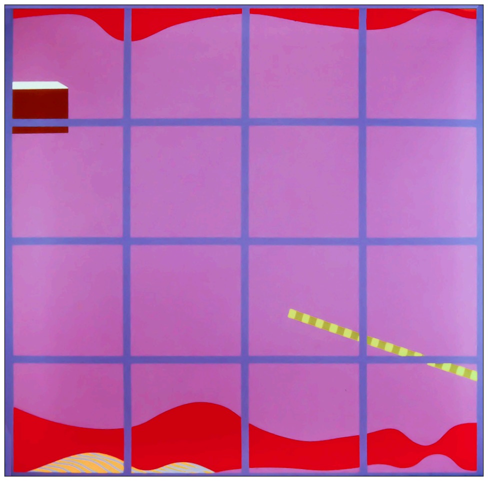
Logos, 1981. Acrylic on canvas, 82 x 69 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



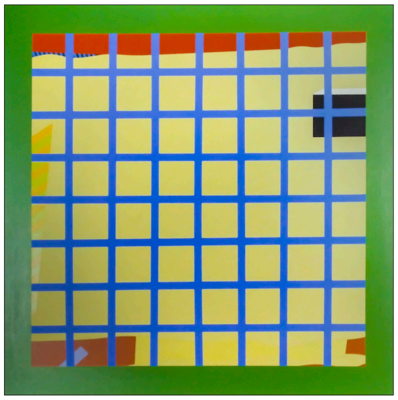
Smyrna, 1981. Acrylic on canvas, 69 x 80 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



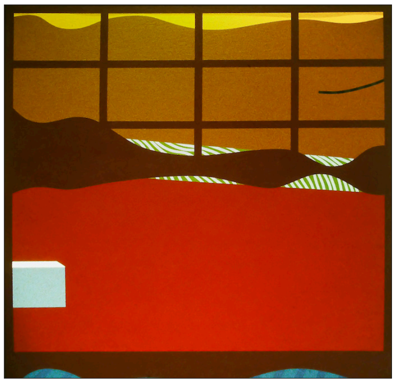
Untitled, 1981–82.
Acrylic on canvas.



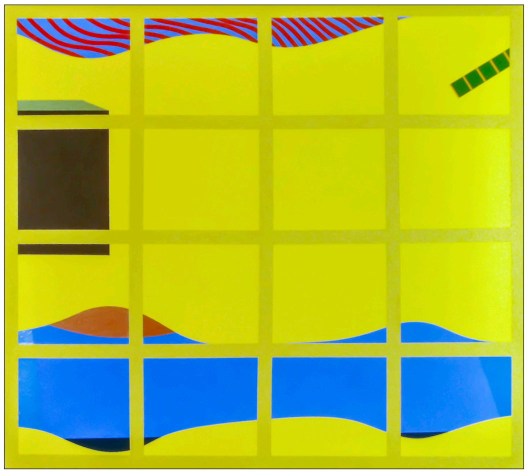
Seron, 1982. Acrylic, 47 x 47 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



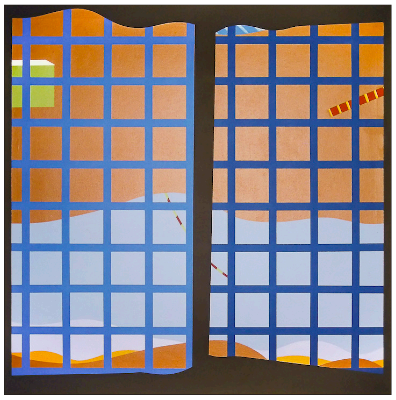
Untitled, 1982.
Acrylic on canvas, 38 x 38 in.



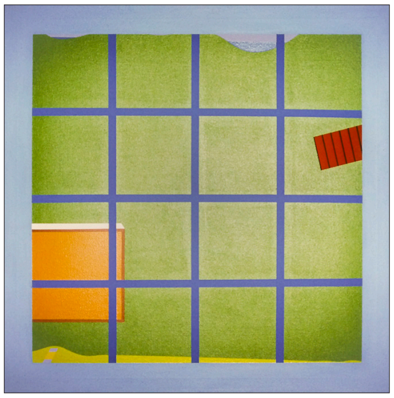
Untitled, 1981.
Acrylic on canvas, 38 x 38 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



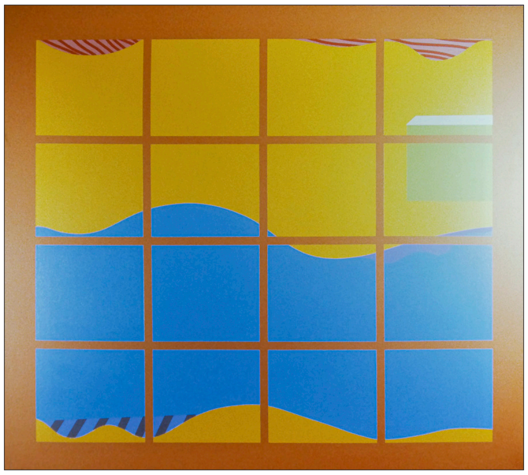
Untitled, 1981 or 82. Acrylic on canvas.



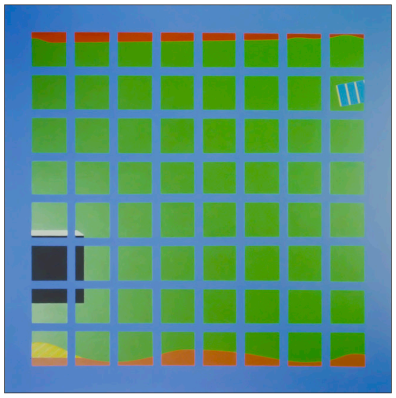
Untitled, 1981.
Acrylic on canvas, 38 x 38 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



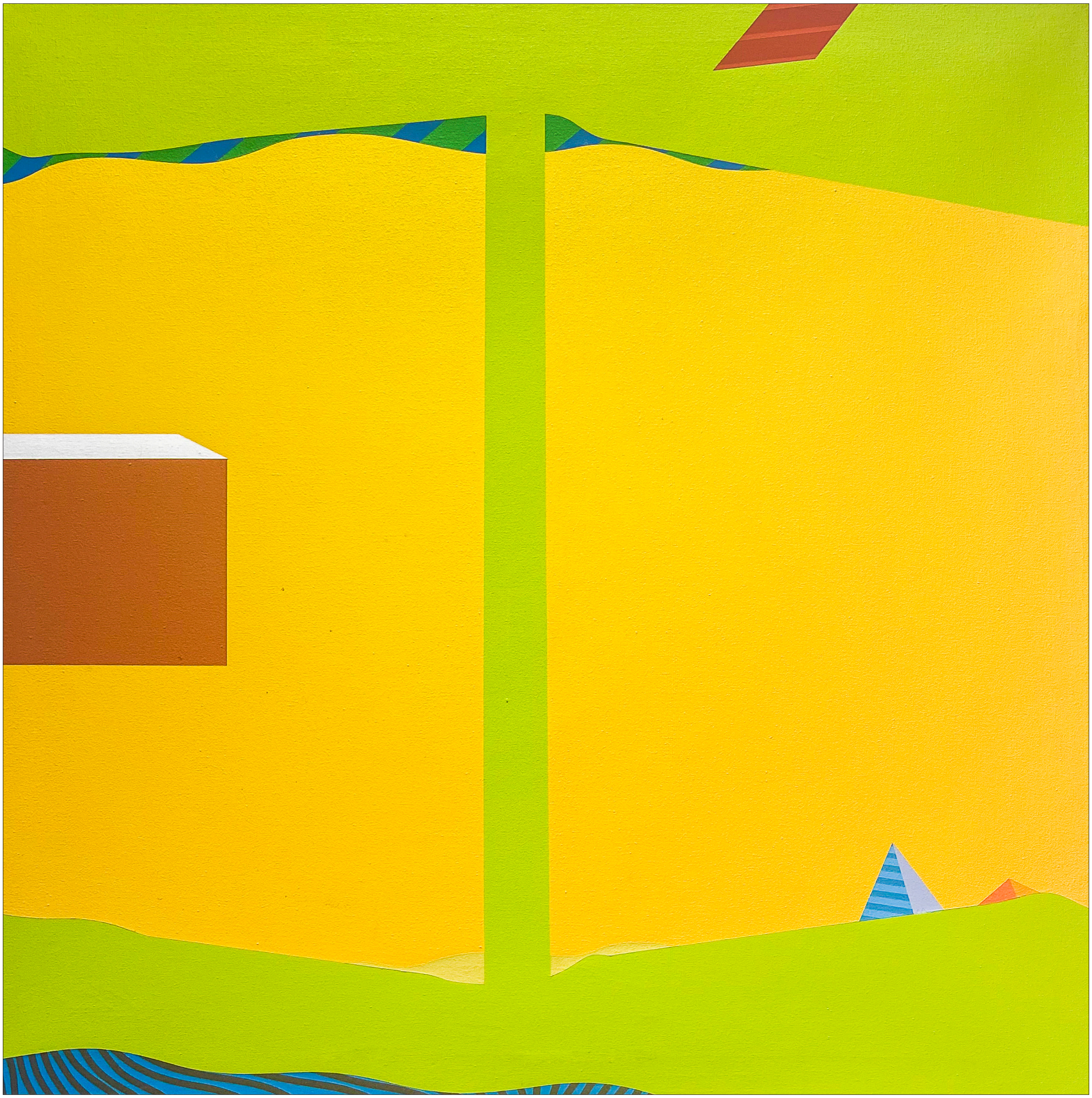
Untitled, 1981.
Acrylic on canvas, 38 x 38 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



Untitled, 1981.
Acrylic on canvas, 45 x 51 in.

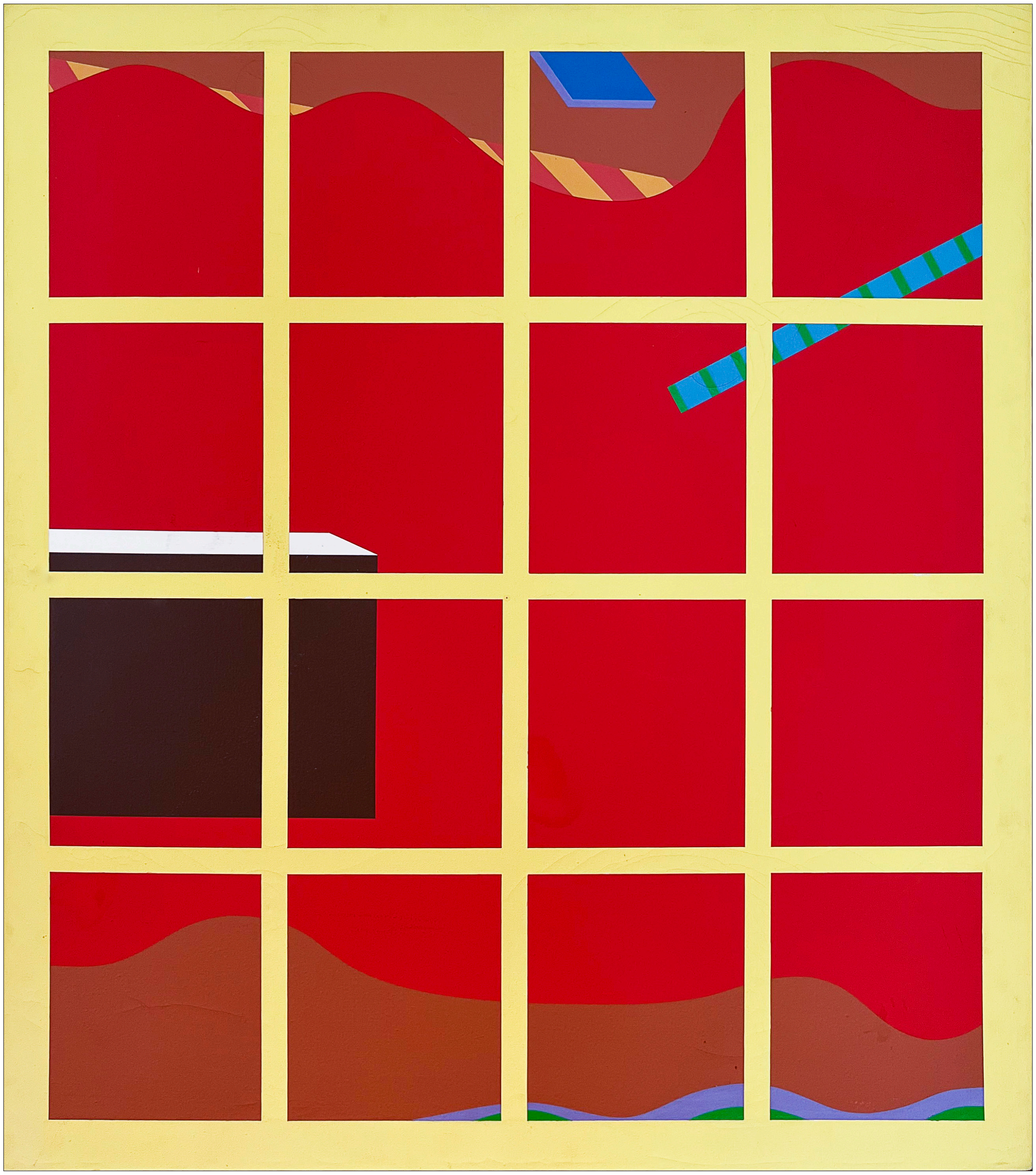


Untitled, 1982.
Acrylic on canvas, 38 x 38 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.



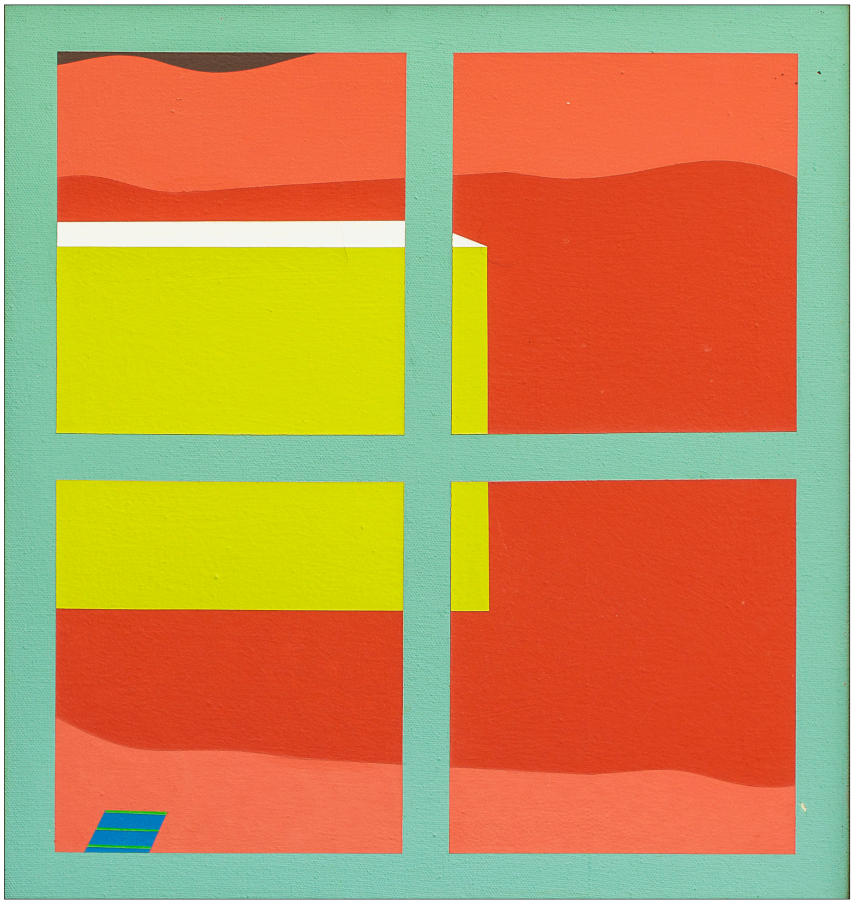
Untitled

1981. Acrylic on canvas, 38.5 x 38 in.
Collection of Kutak Rock.

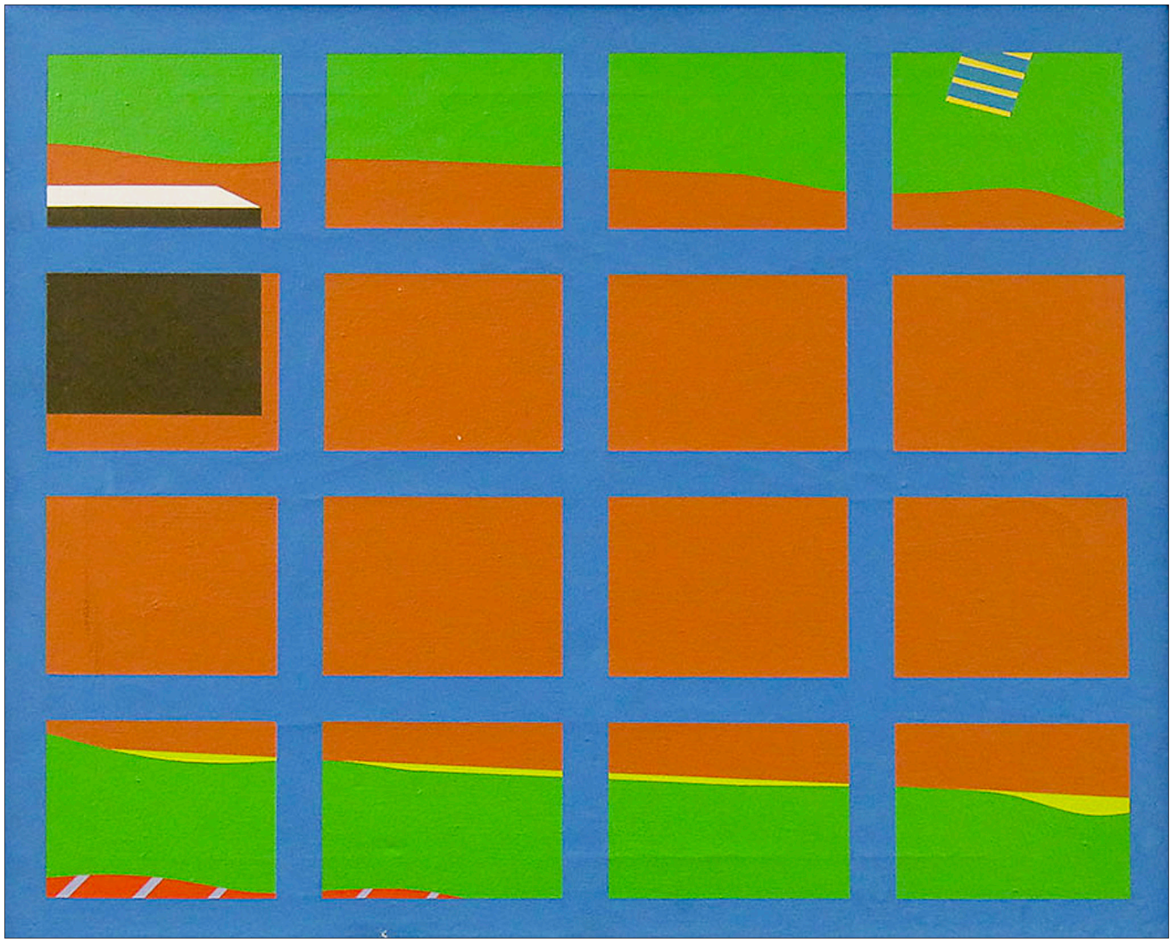


Untitled

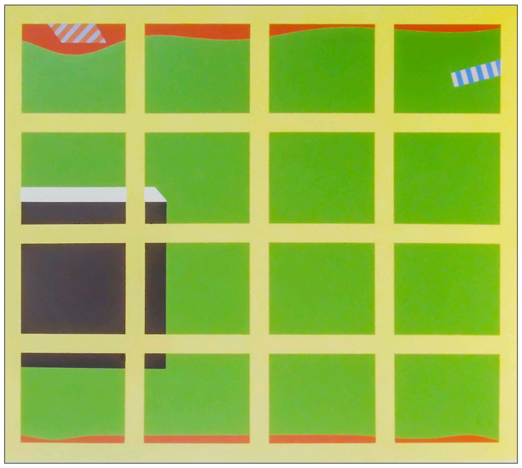
1981. Acrylic on canvas, 34.75 x 30.75 in.
Collection of Haven and Simmy Pell.



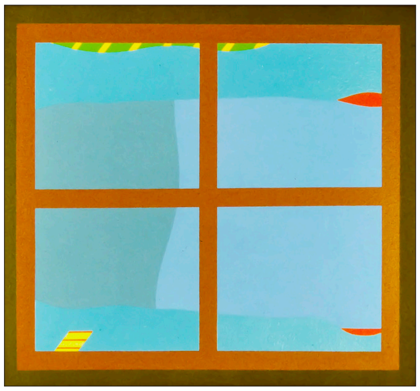
Untitled, 1982. Acrylic on canvas, 15 x 14 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.



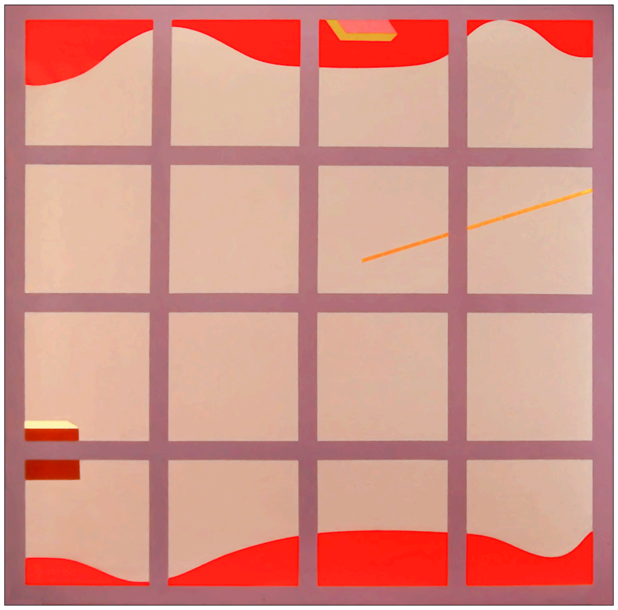
Orange Torso, 1982.
Acrylic on canvas, 16 x 25 in.
Collection of the Museum of Nebraska Art.



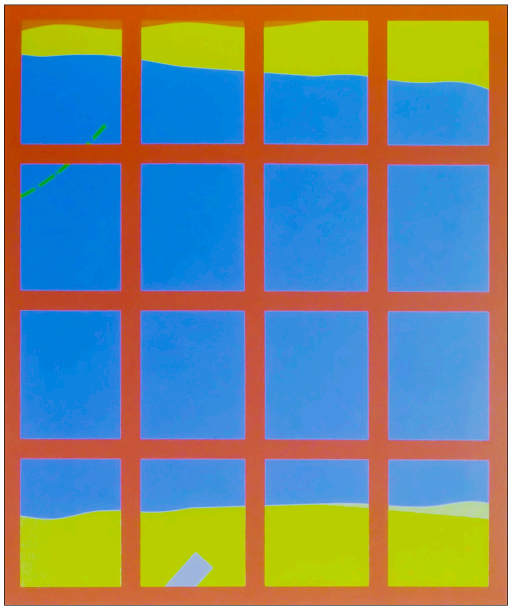
Yellow Field, 1982. Acrylic, 18 x 26 in.



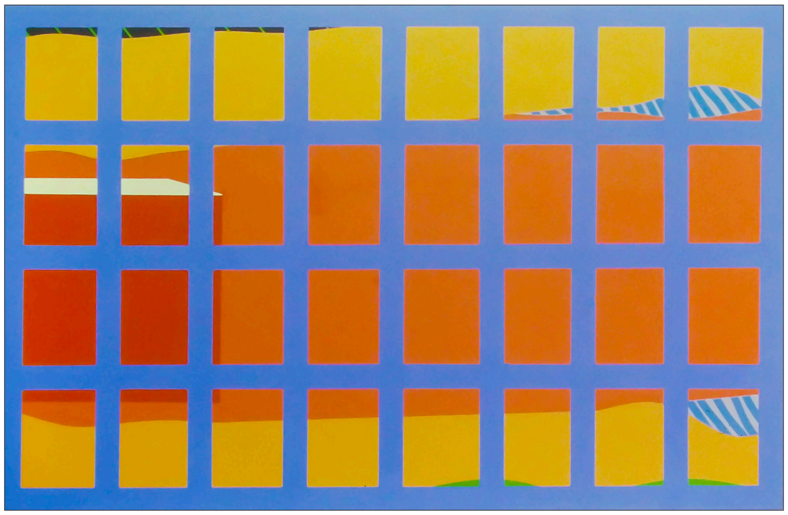
Untitled, 1982. Acrylic, 15 x 14 in.



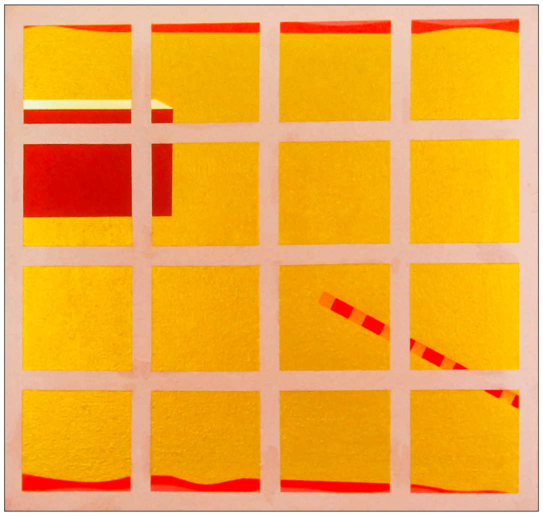
Untitled, 1982. Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 in.



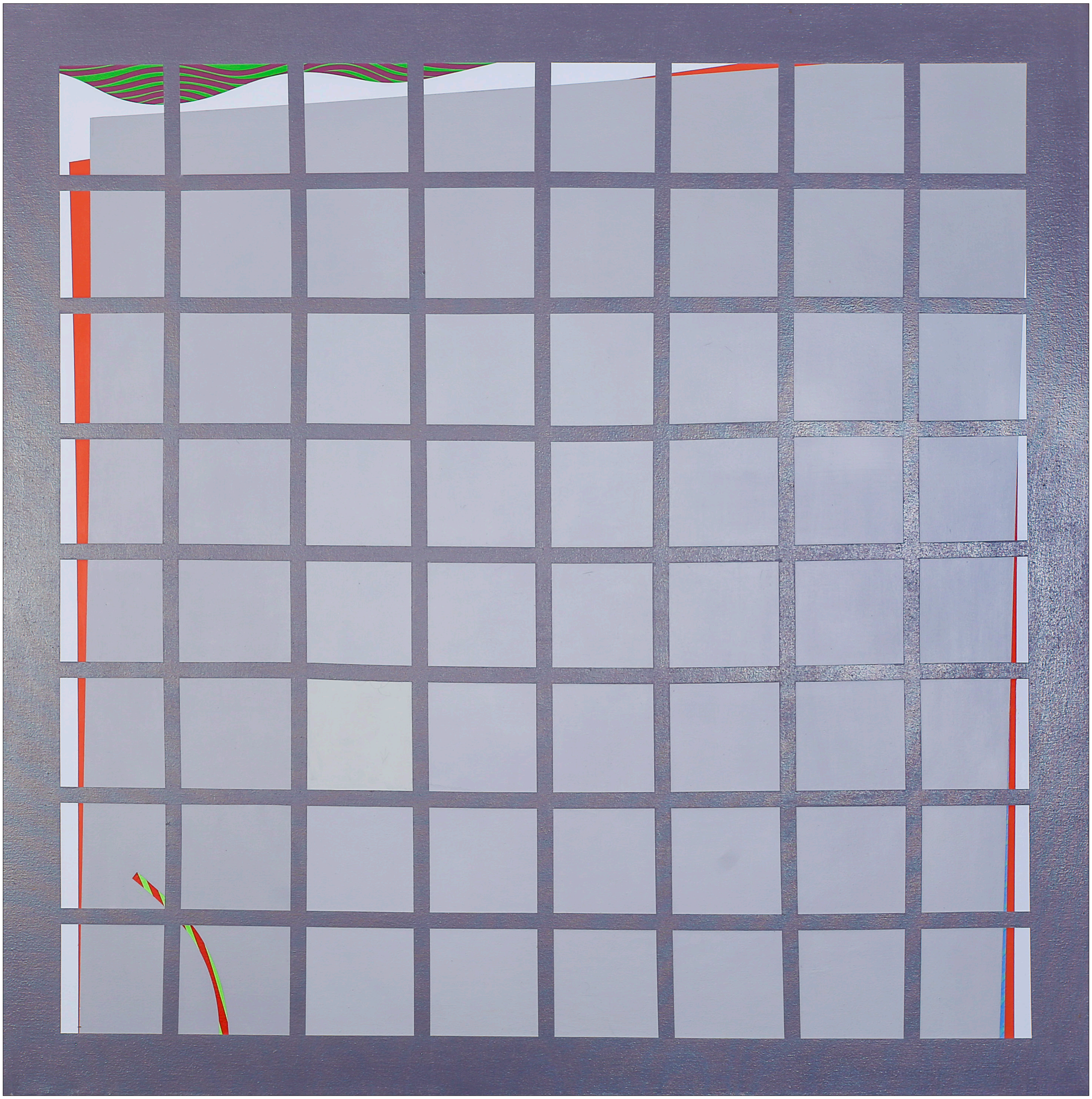
Blue Torso, 1982. Acrylic, 24 x 20 in.



Untitled, 1982. Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 30 in.

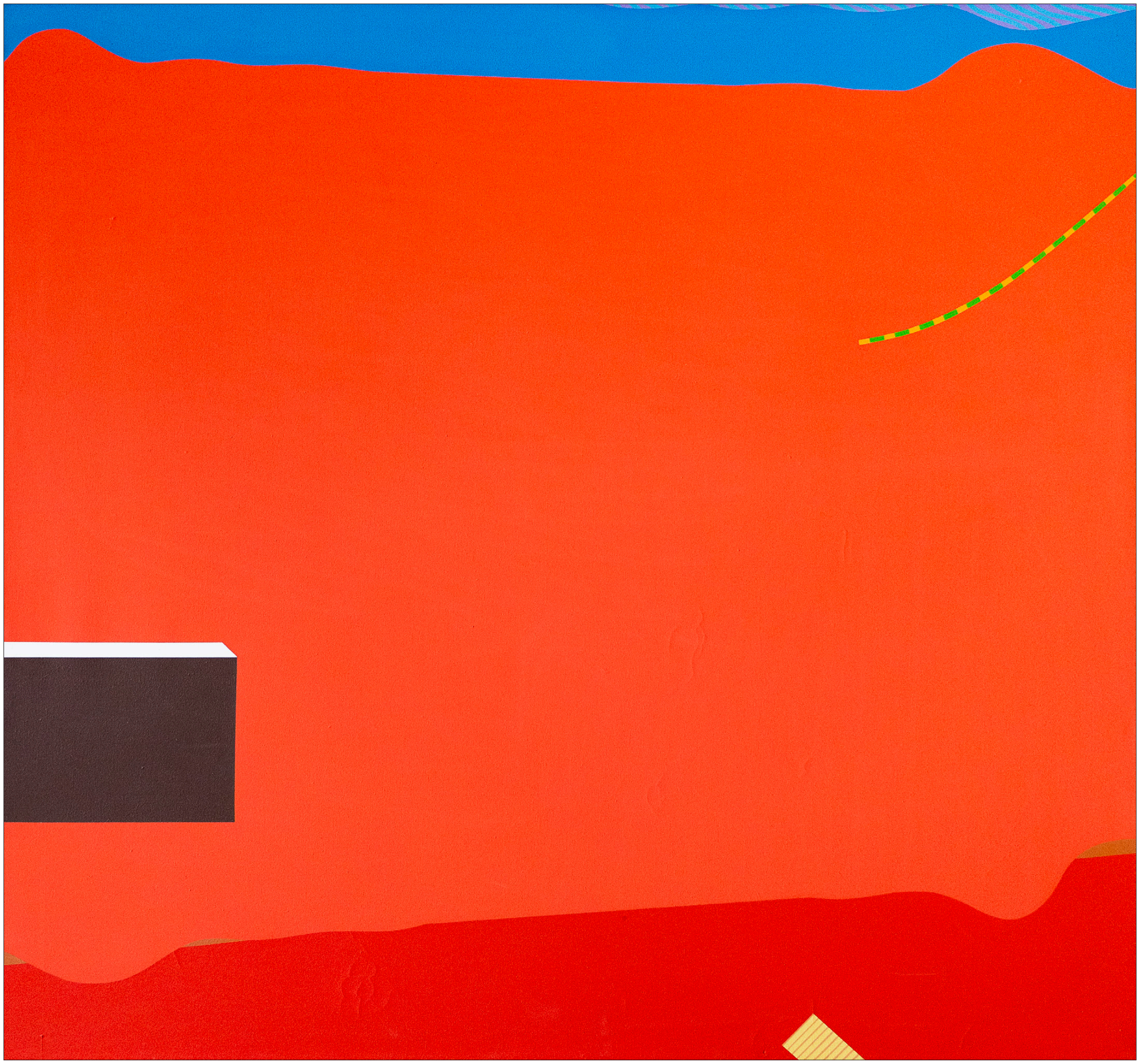


Untitled, 1982. Acrylic, 20 x 19 in.



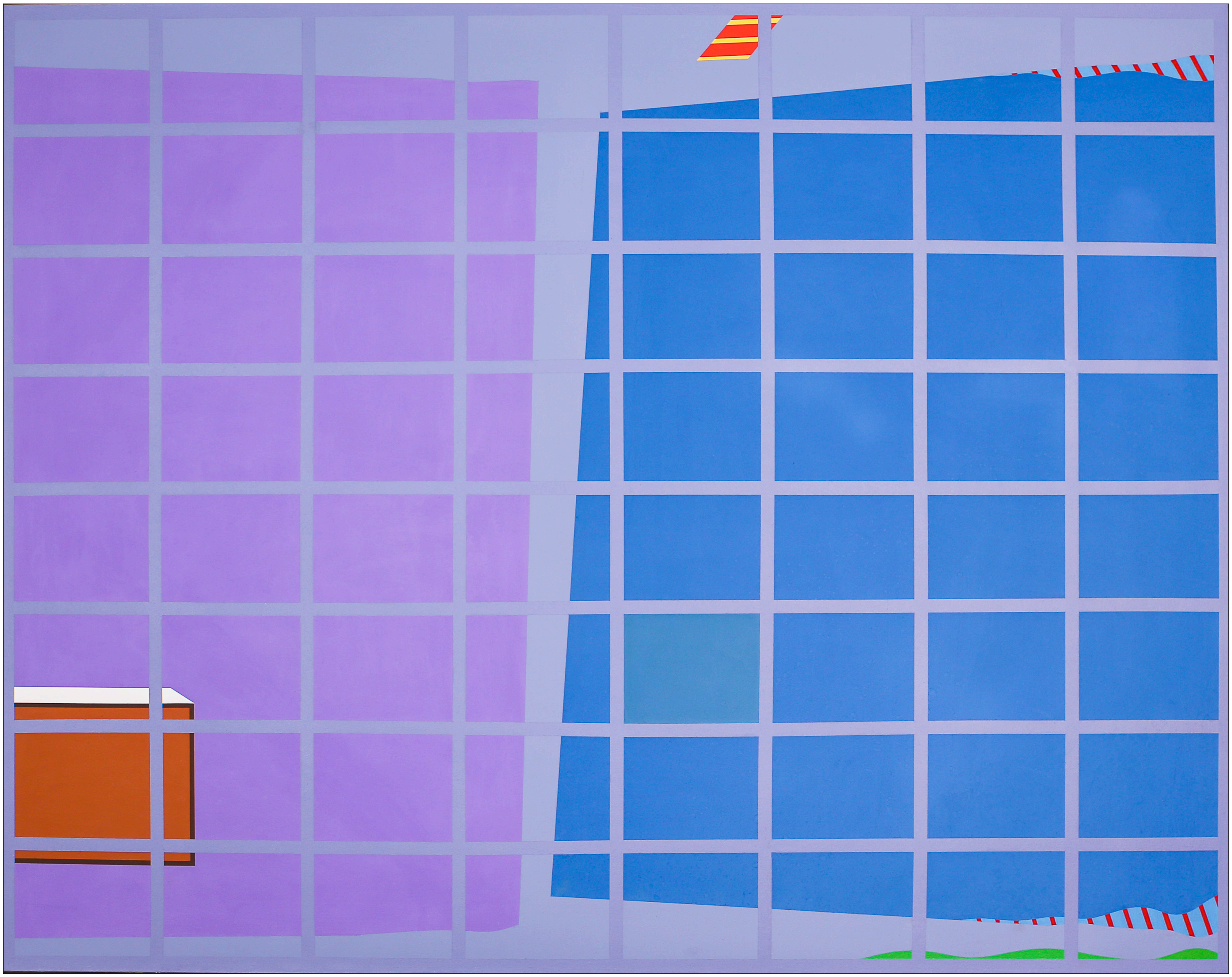
Untitled

1982. Acrylic on canvas.
Collection of Stephen and Leslie Hill.



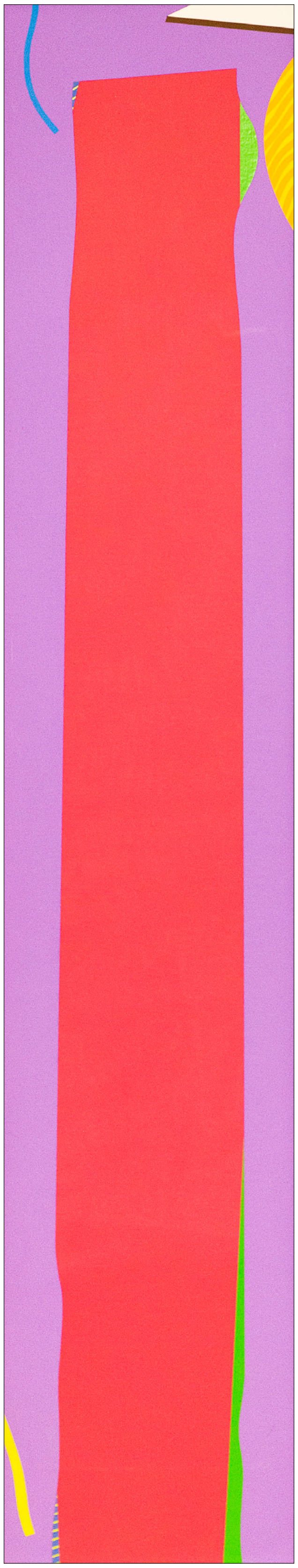
Hittite

1982. Acrylic on canvas, 52 x 56 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.



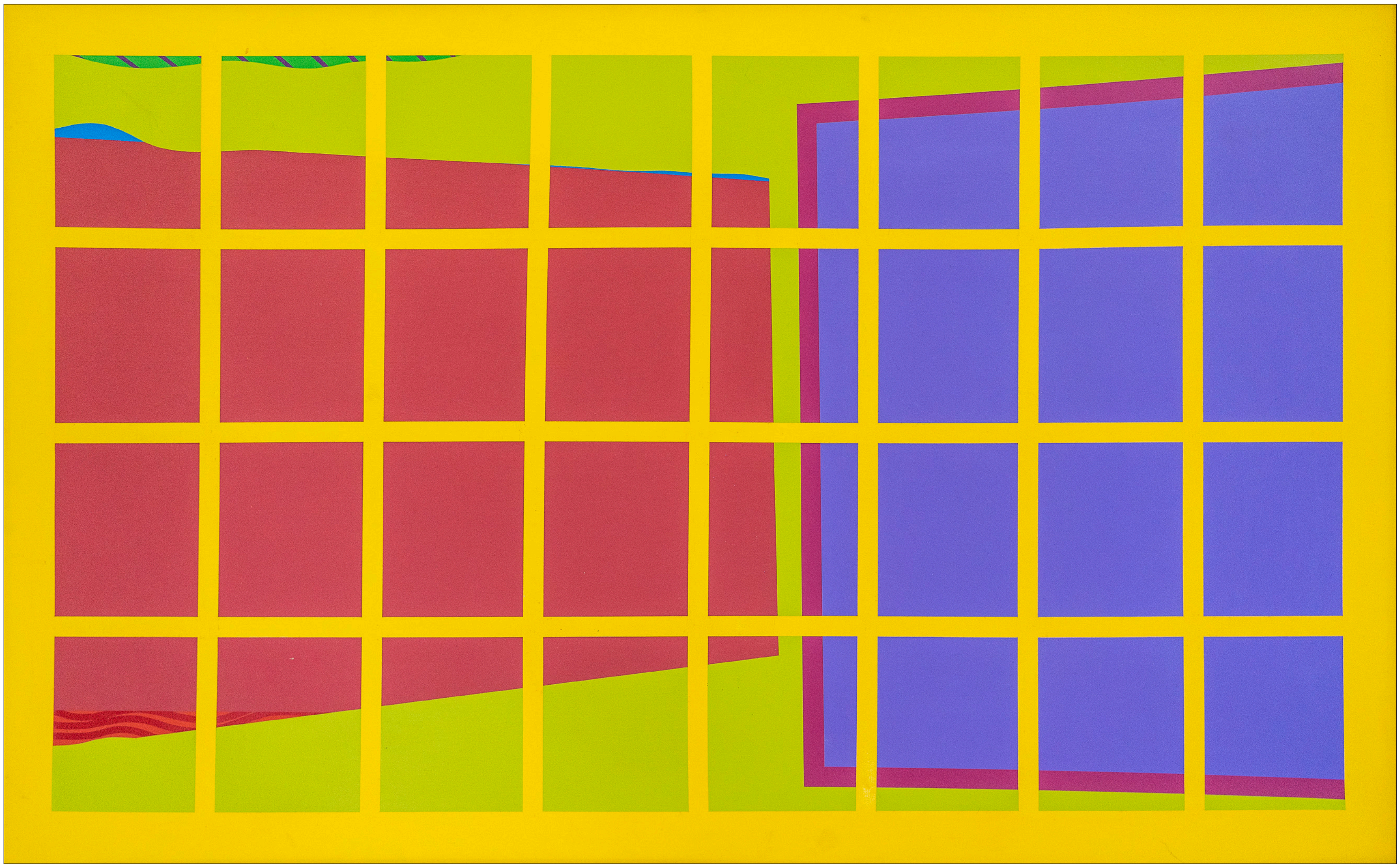
Cumae

1982. Acrylic on canvas, 54 x 69 in.
Collection of Stephen and Leslie Hill.



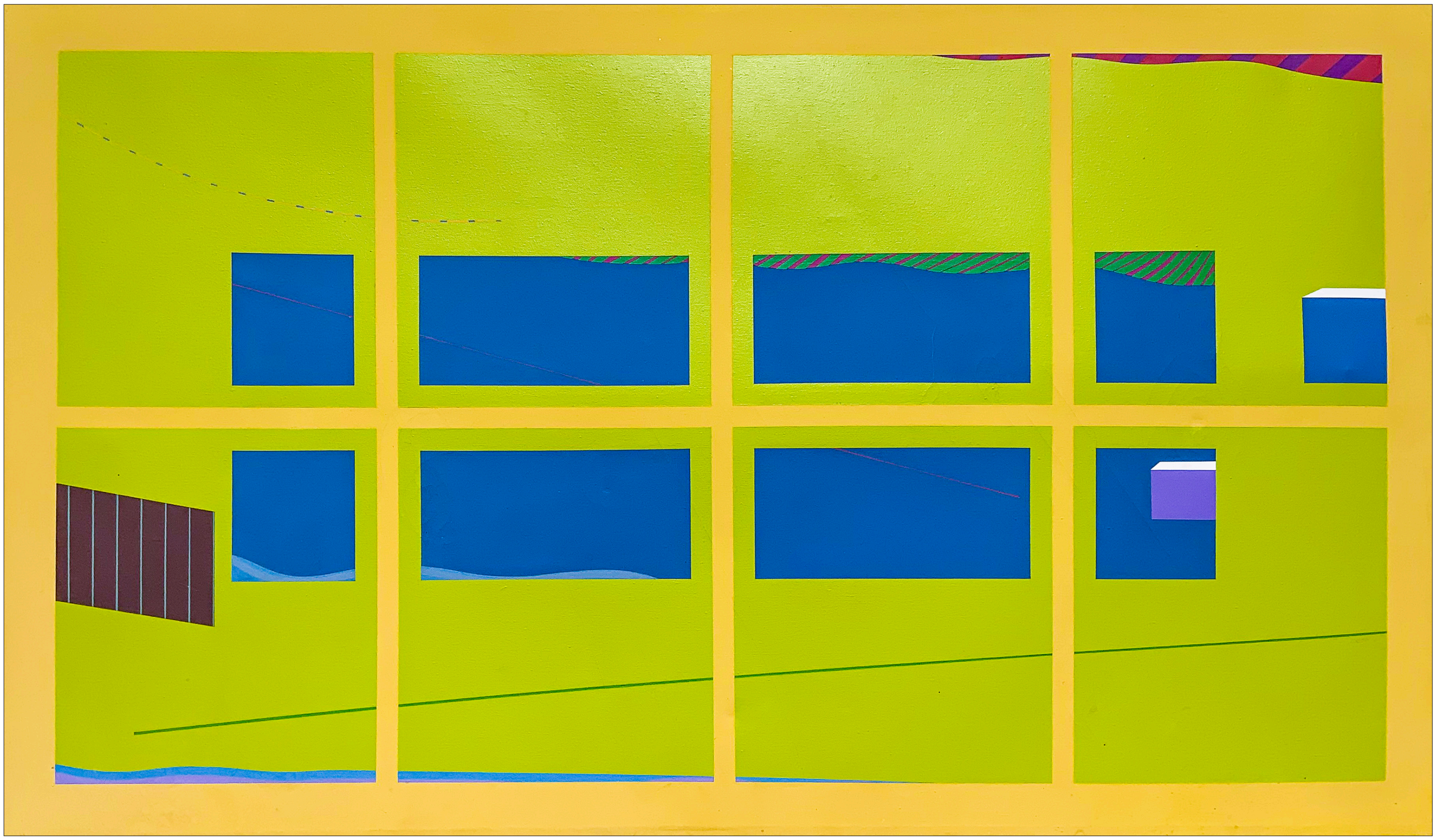
Untitled

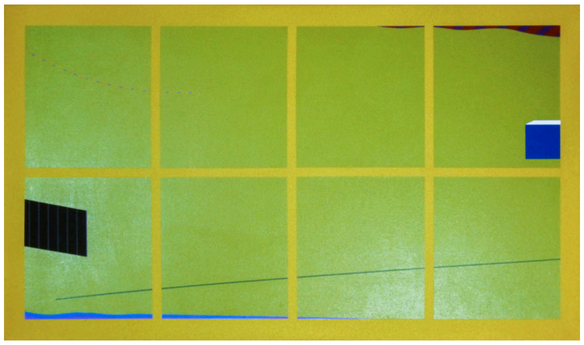
Probably 1982 or 1983. Acrylic on canvas and wood, 59 x 11.5 in.
Collection of David and Tracy Wintroub.



Untitled

1982–3. Acrylic on canvas, 32 x 51 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.

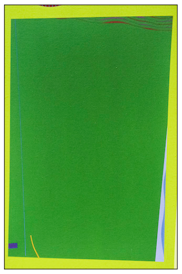




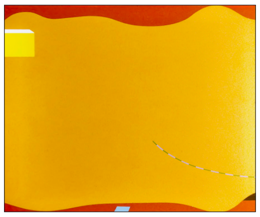
Untitled (early version)

Untitled (final version)

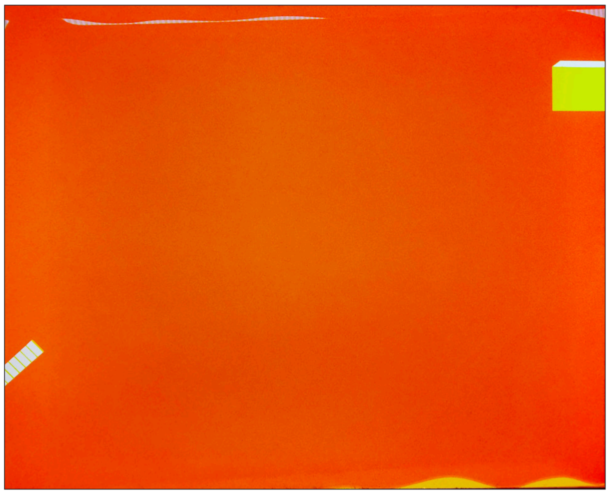
1983. Acrylic on canvas, 30 x 51 in.
Collection of Robert Hill and Tana Siebert.



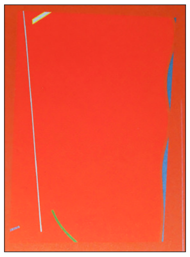
Plain, 1984.
Acrylic, 27 x 18 in.



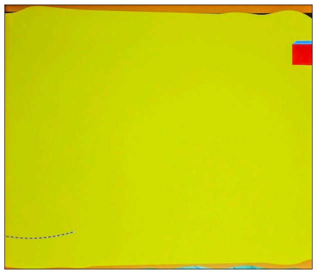
Centurion, 1982.
Acrylic, 20 x 24 in.



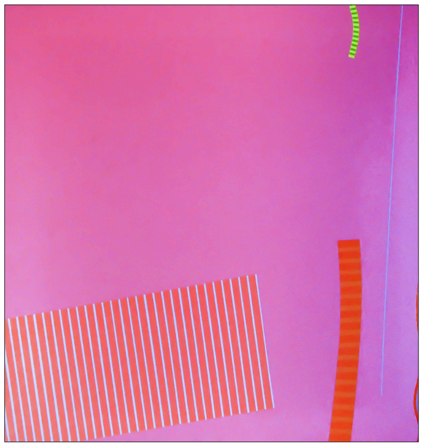
Pneumo, 1982. Acrylic on canvas, 55.5 x 68 in.
Collection of Phil Schrager.



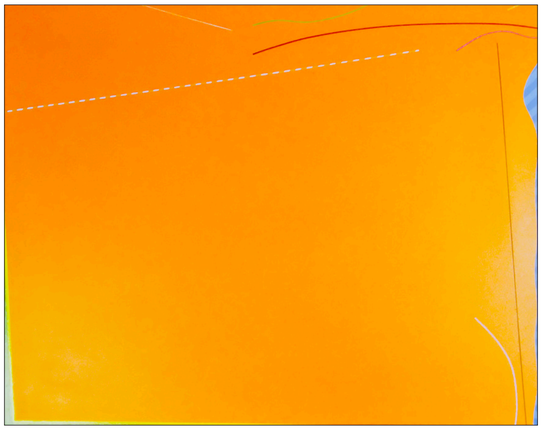
Shift. Acrylic,
26 x 19 in.



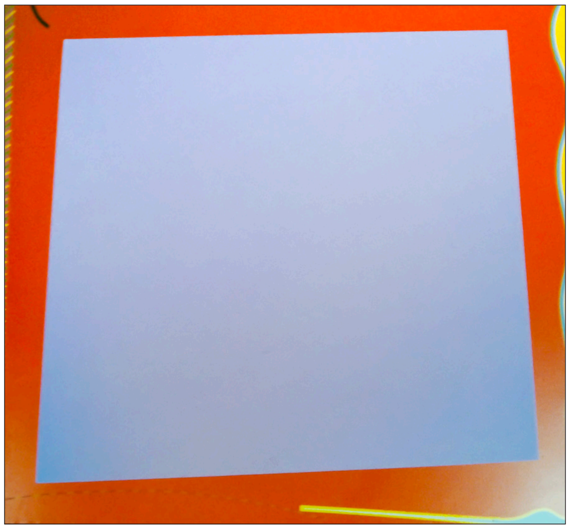
Salamanca, 1982.
Acrylic, 26 x 30 in.



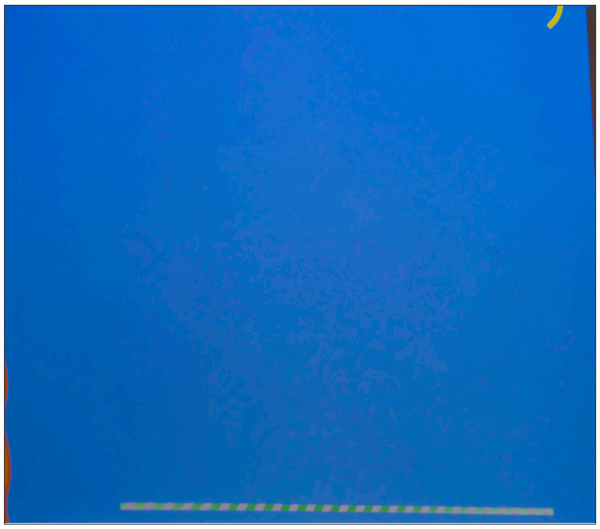
Oranto, 1983. Acrylic, 49 x 47 in.



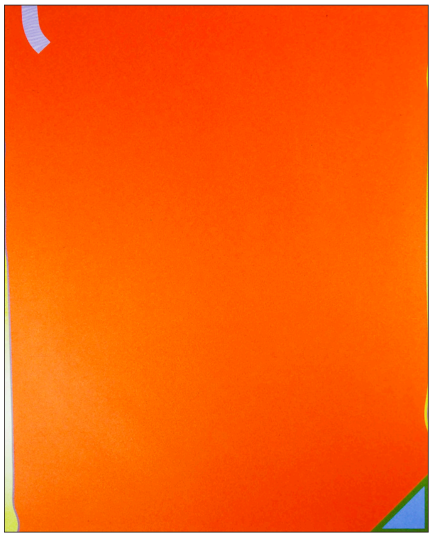
Mo-Tzu, 1983. Acrylic, 48 x 60 in.



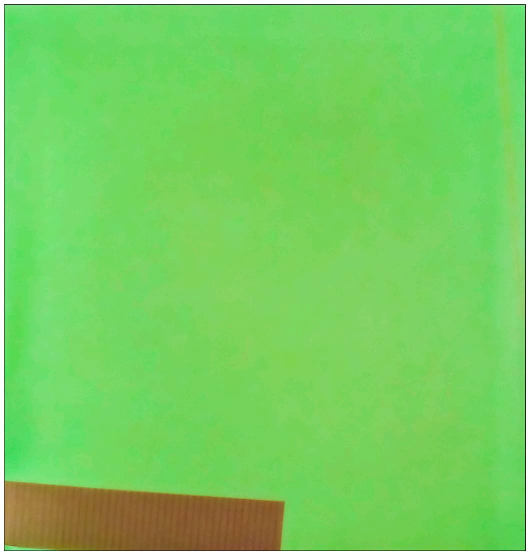
Ibis II, 1983. Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 66 in.



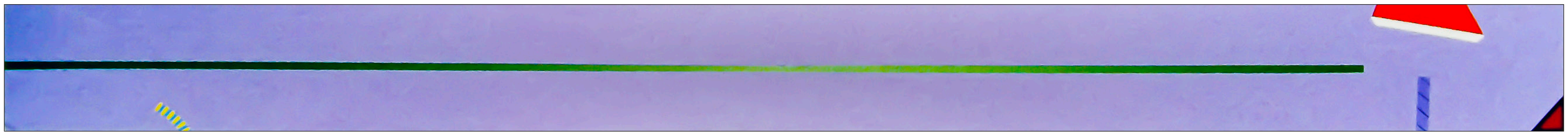
Andulusia, 1982. Acrylic, 60 x 68.5 in.



Sargon, 1983. Acrylic, 68.5 x 58 in.

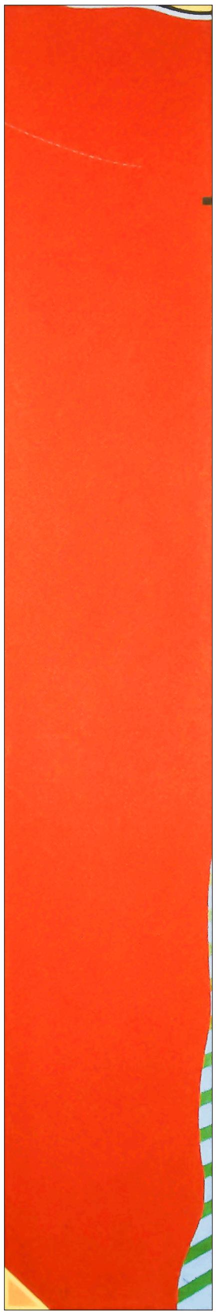


Verdi, 1982. Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 68 in.

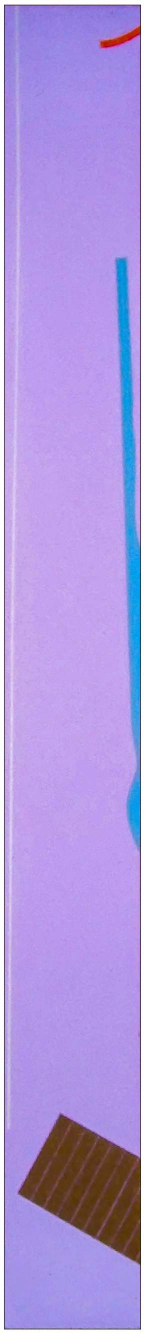


Orange Corner, 1982. Acrylic on wood and canvas, 8 x 94 in.

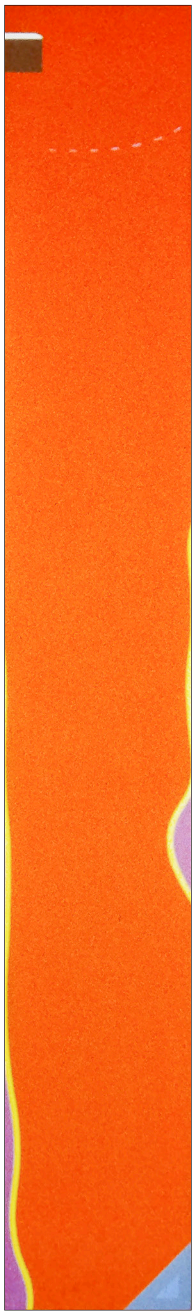
Tall I, 1982.
Acrylic, 72 x 11 in.

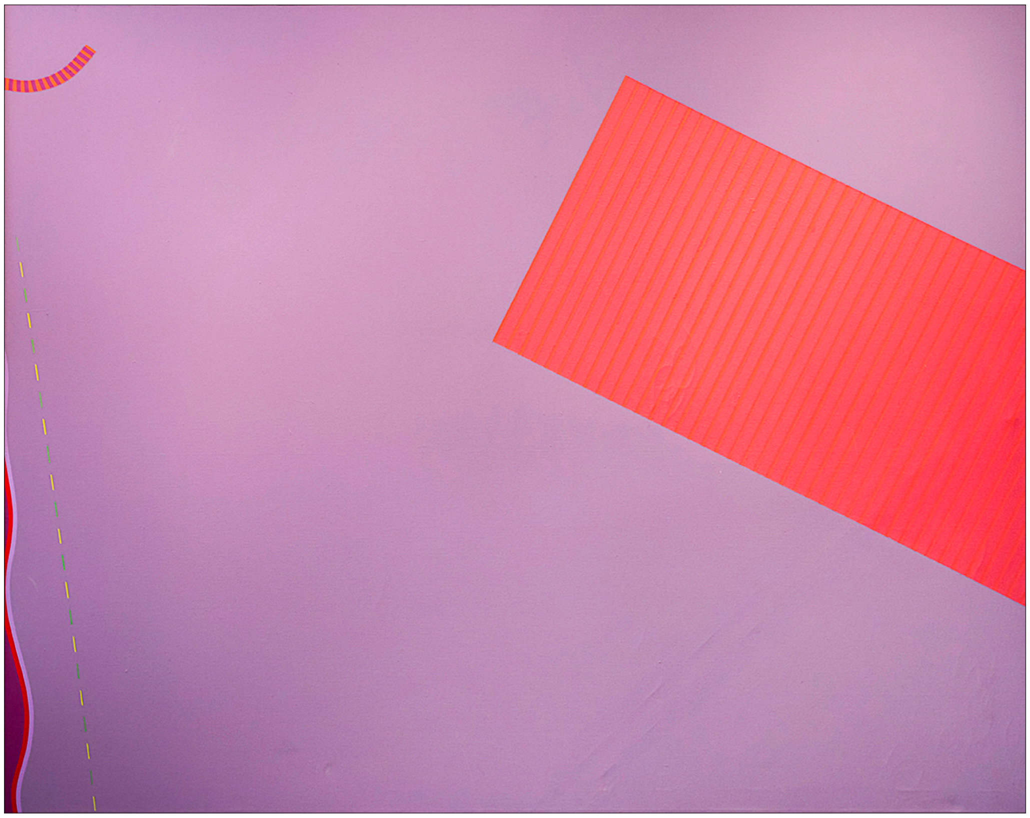


Tall II, 1983.
Acrylic, 73 x 7.5 in.

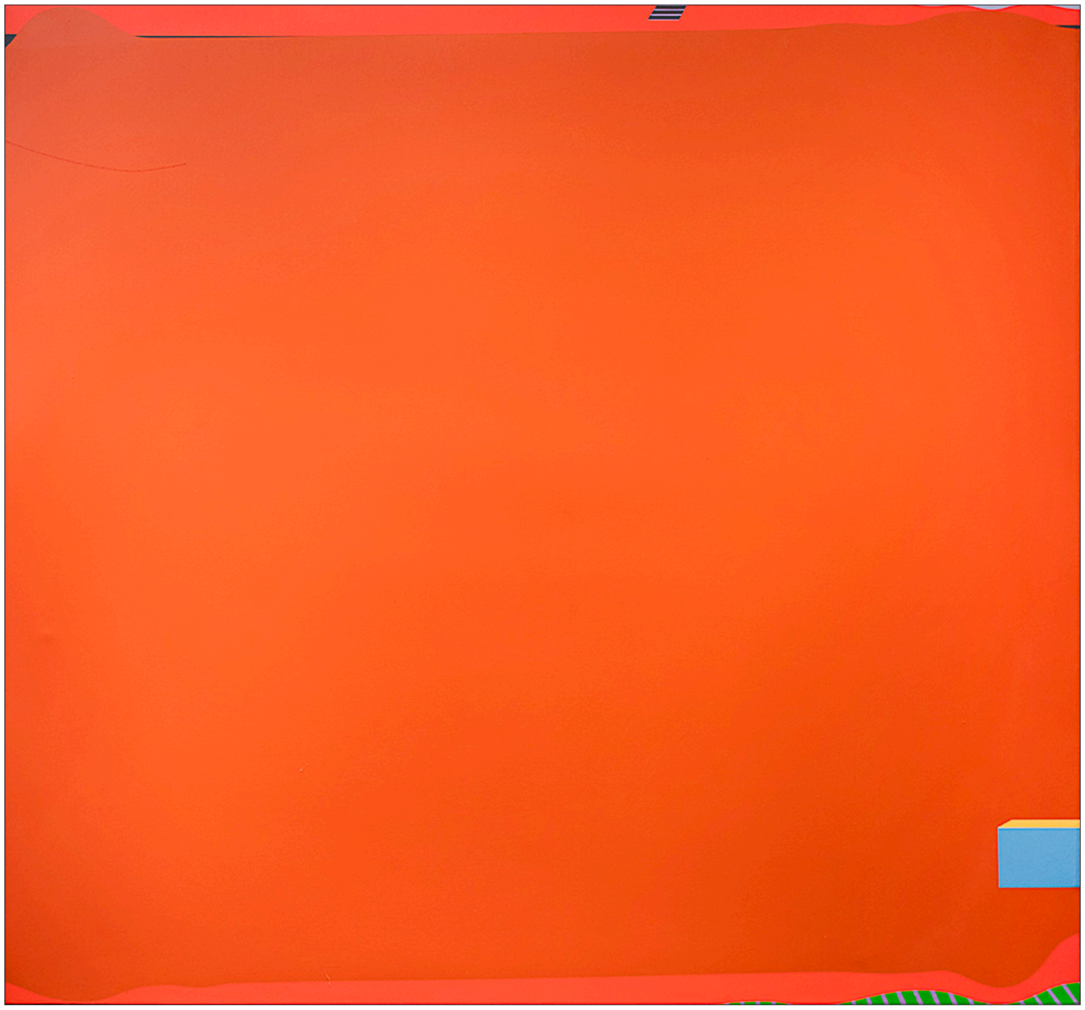


Tall III, 1983.
Acrylic, 72 x 12 in.

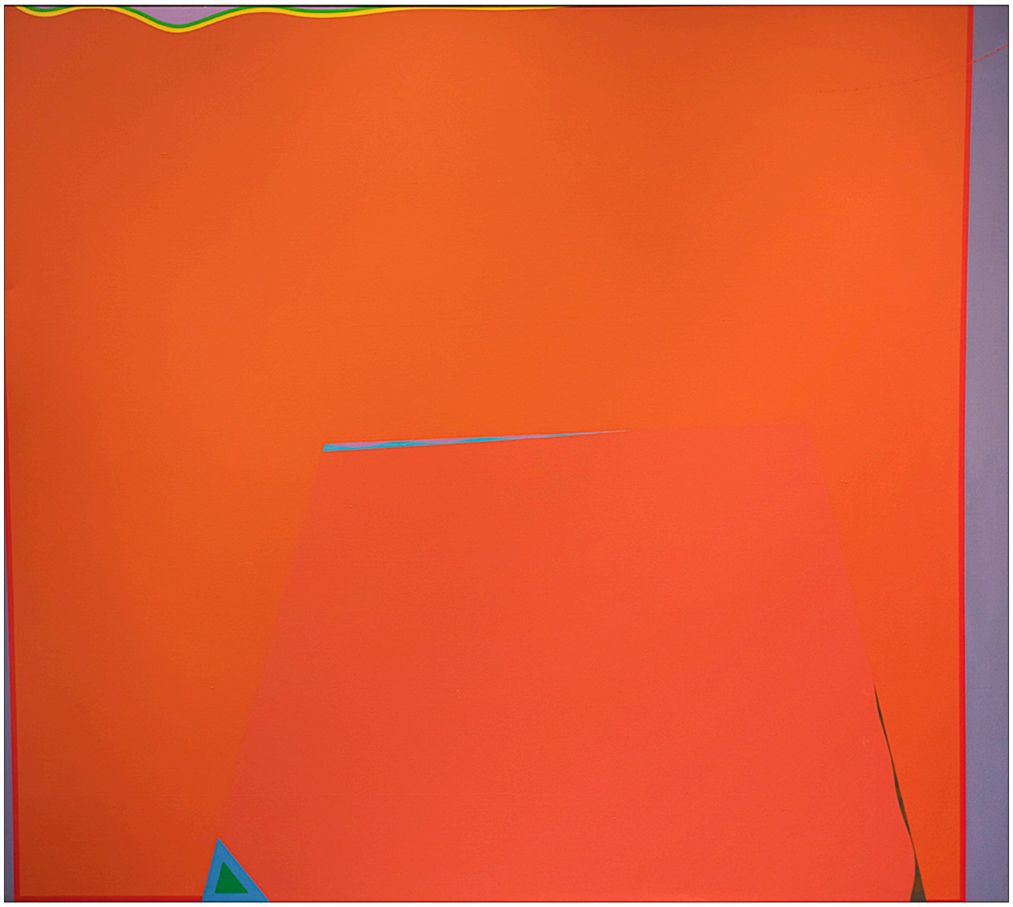




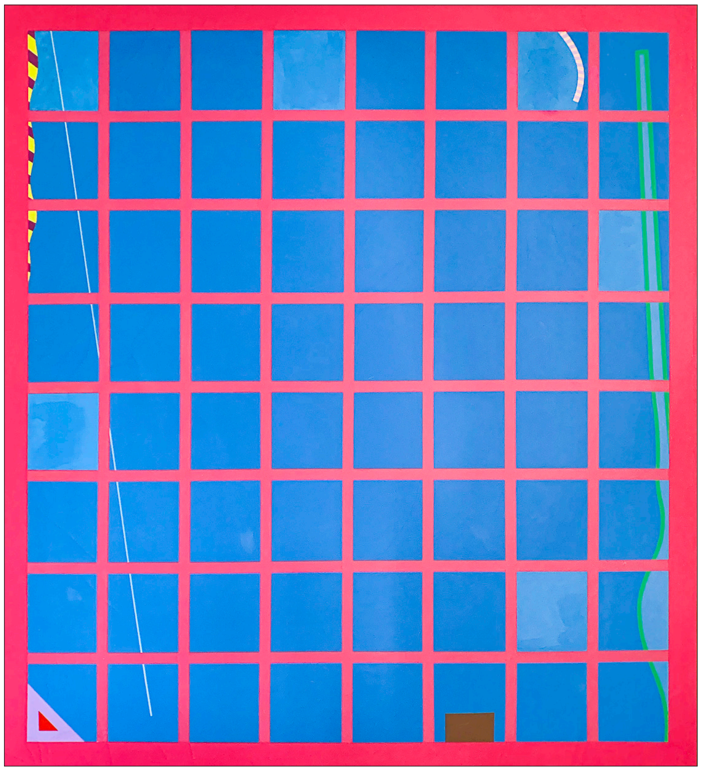
Pictor, 1983. Acrylic on canvas, 55 x 69 in.



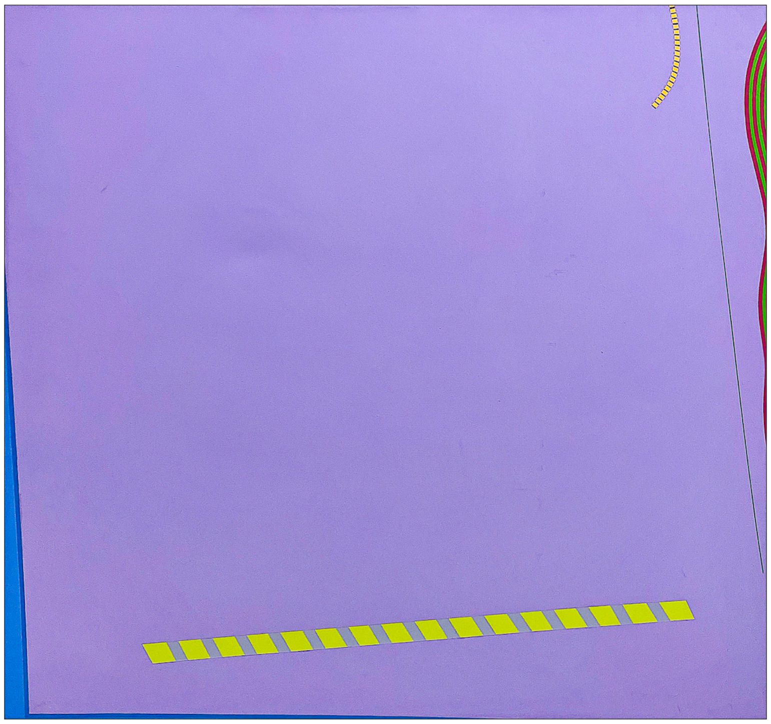
Cadiz, 1982. Acrylic on canvas, 68 x 72 in.



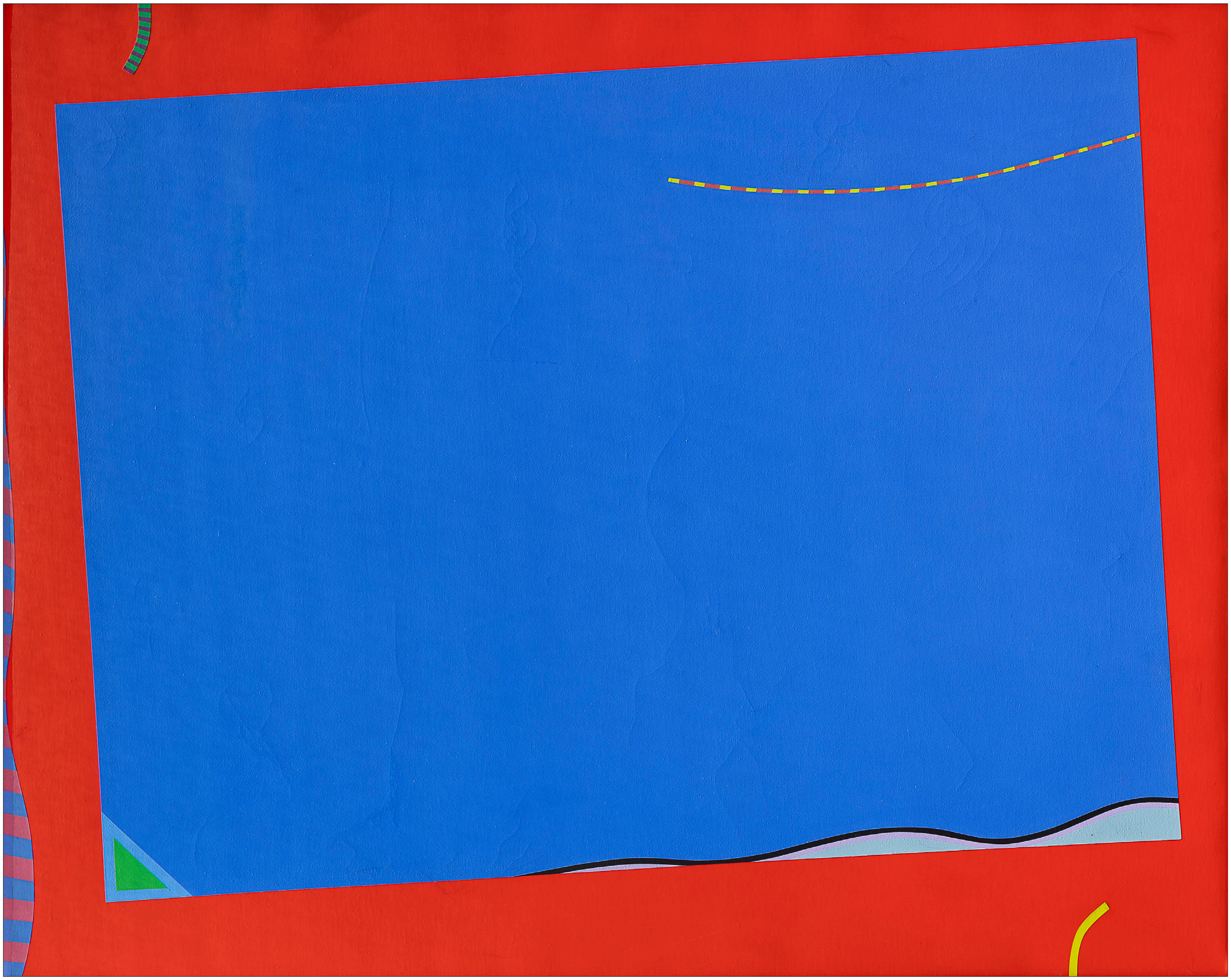
Manasseh, 1982. Acrylic on canvas, 61 x 68 in.



Ibis, 1983. Acrylic on canvas, 52 in. x 48 in.
Collection of Todd ("T. J.") and Shanna Freeman.

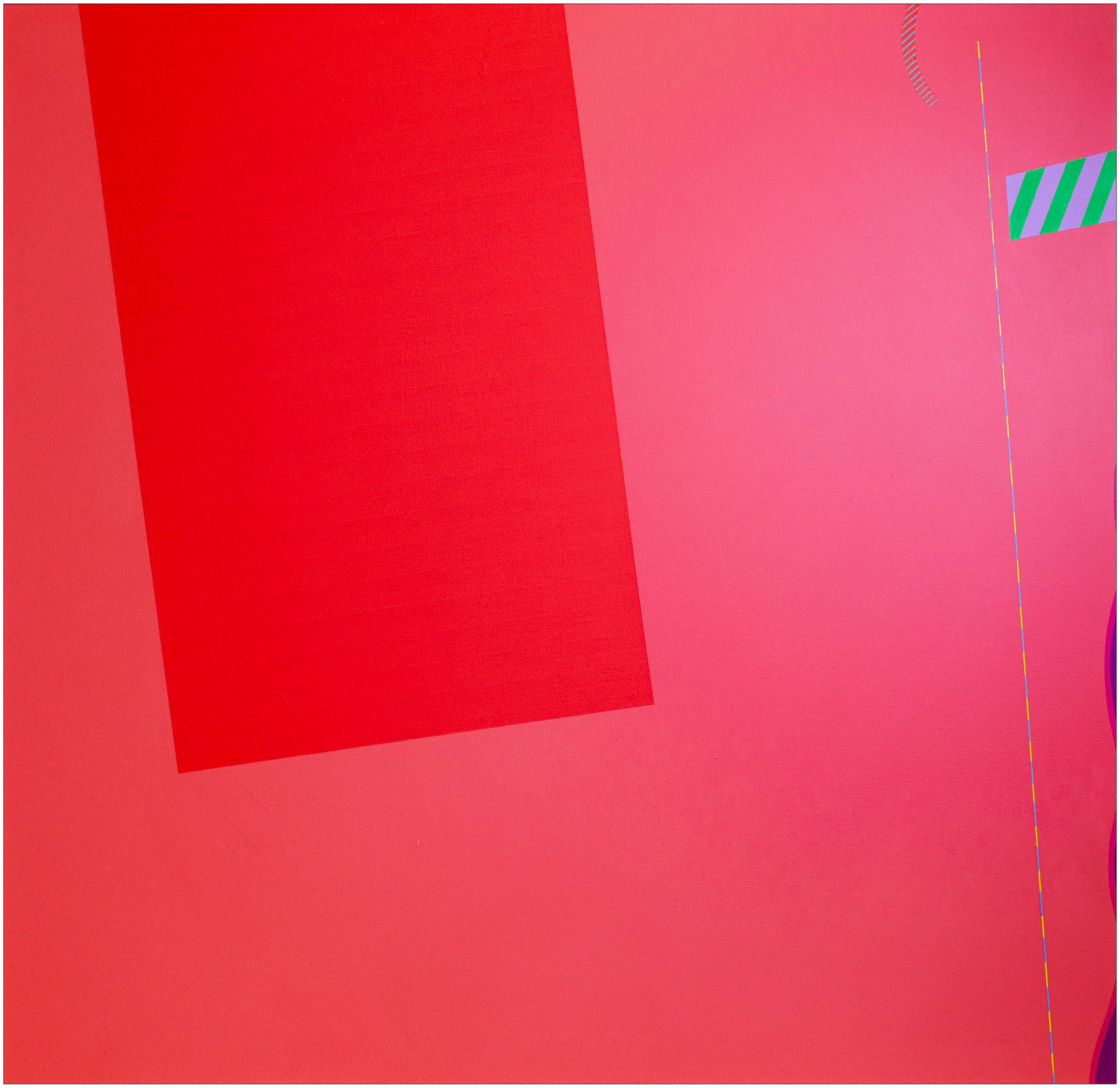


Blue Edge, 1983. Acrylic on canvas, 48.5 x 52 in.
Collection of Patrick Rock.



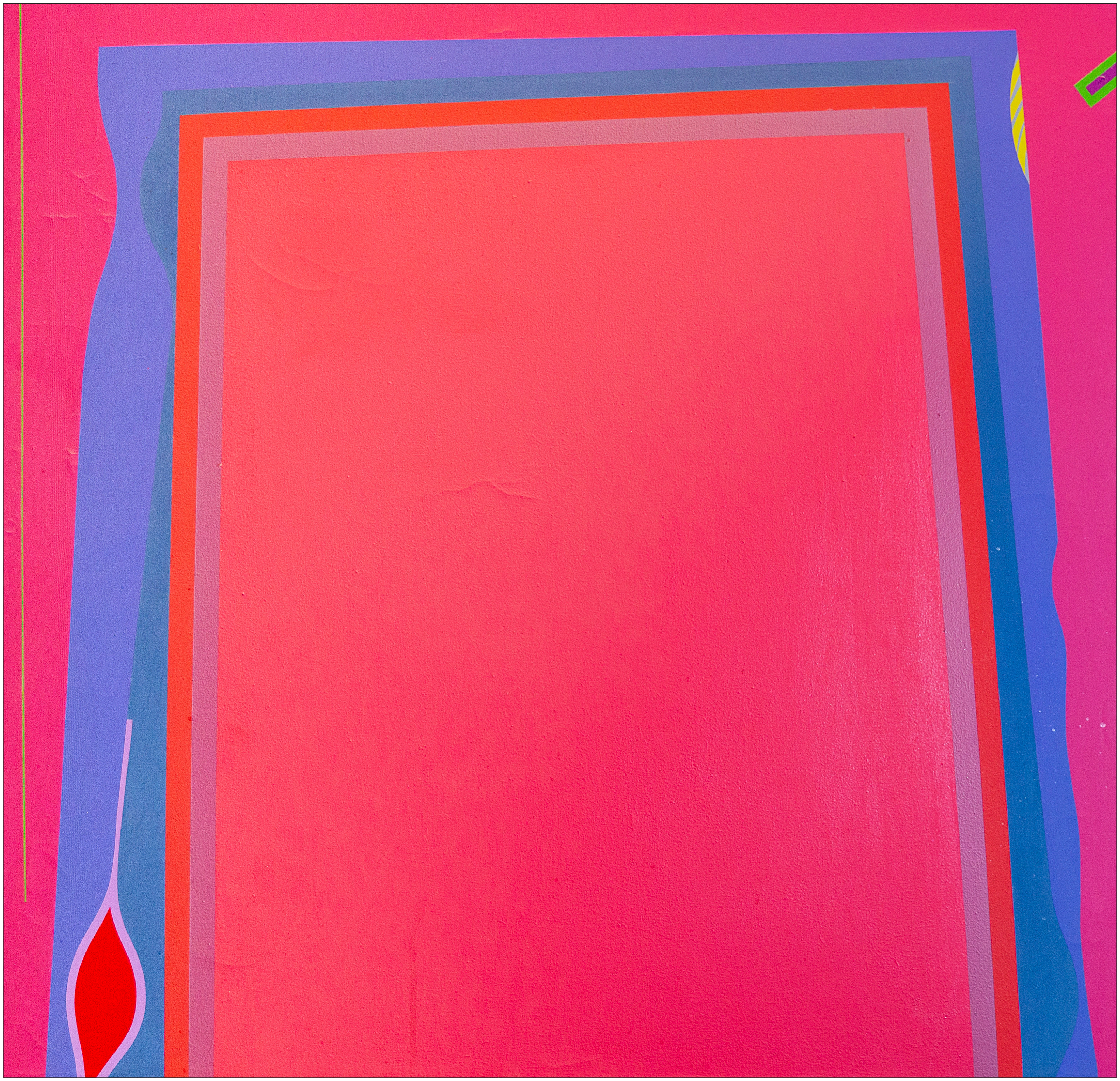
Stamp

1983. Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 60.5 in.
Collection of Henningson, Durham & Richardson, Inc.



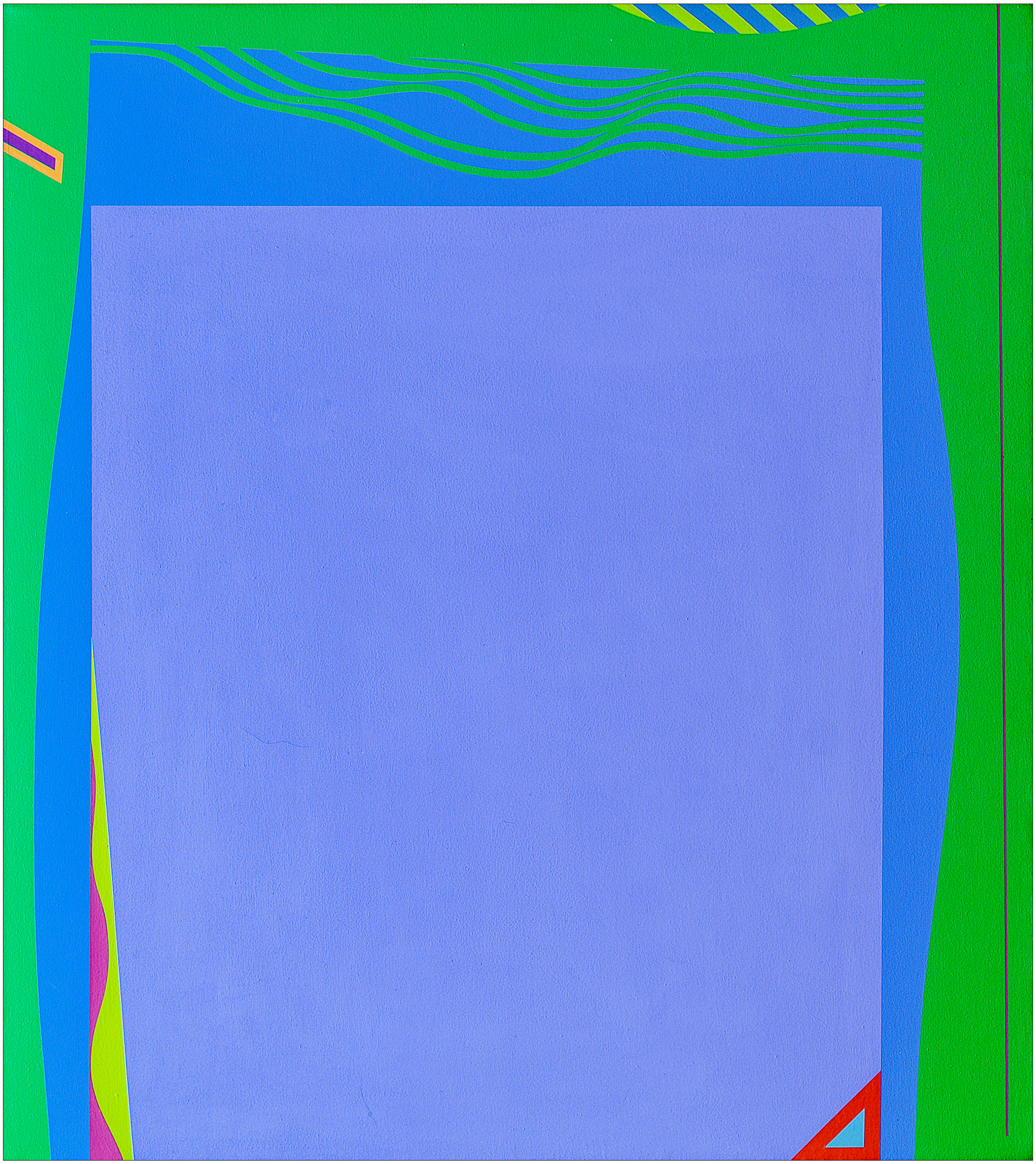
Title unknown

Probably 1983 or 1984. Acrylic on canvas, 50 x 50 in.
Collection of Dana and Scott Porter.



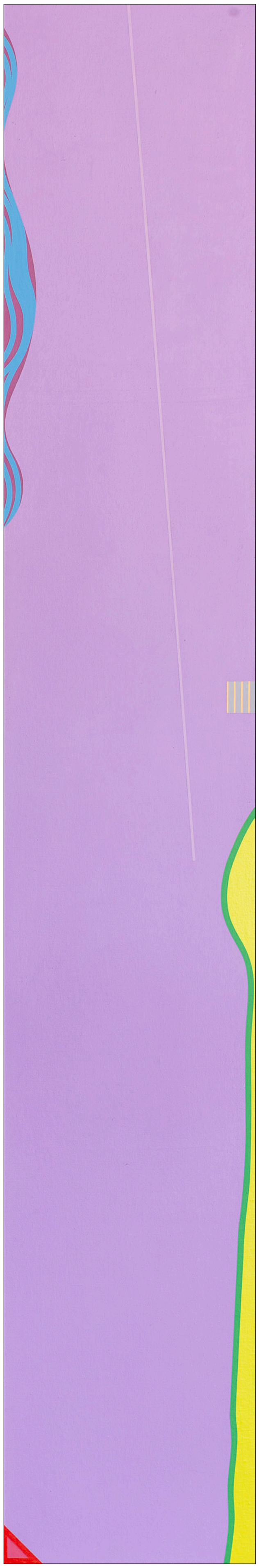
Monument

1984–90. Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 35 in.
Collection of Dana and Scott Porter.



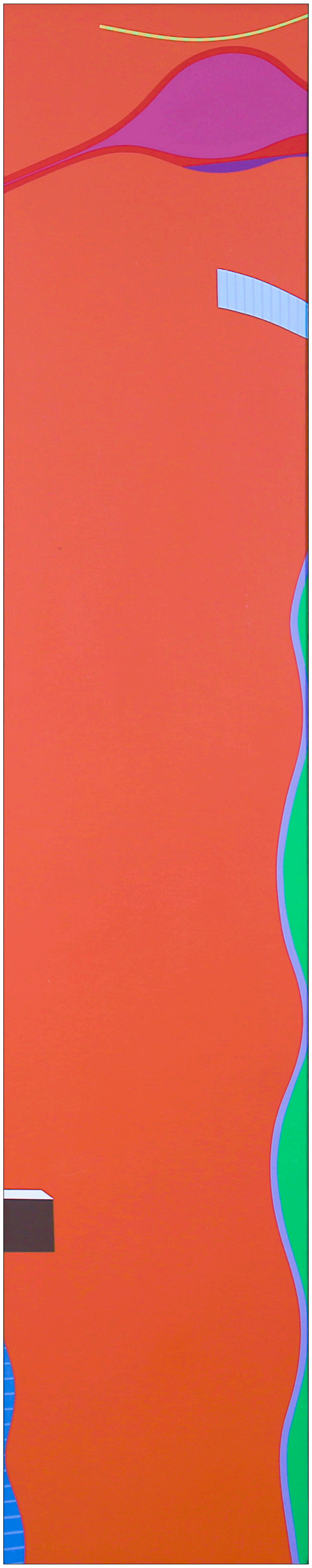
Untitled

1984. Acrylic on canvas, 37.75 x 33.75 in.
Collection of Jonathan and Maureen Hill.



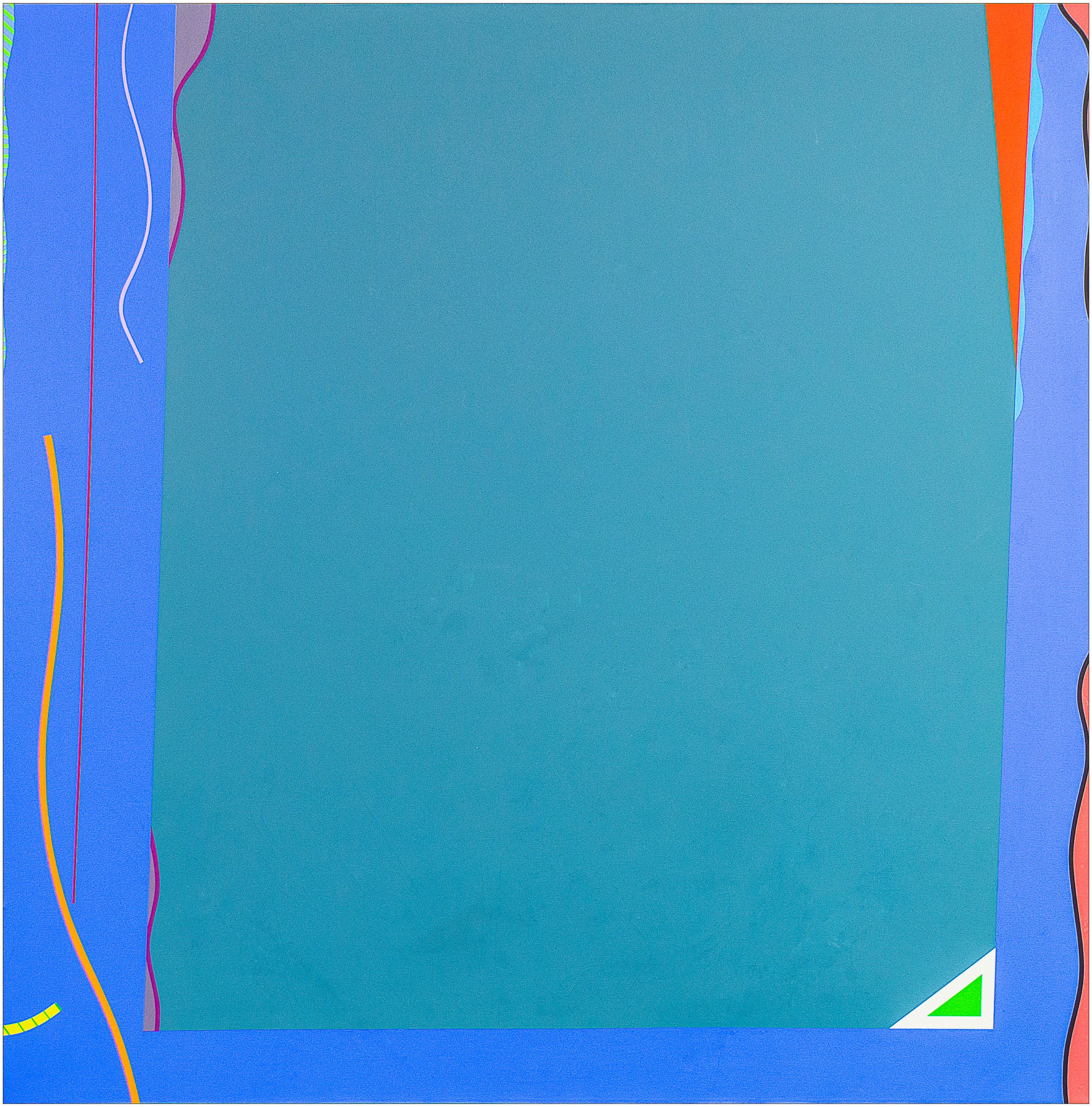
Avignon

1983. Acrylic on canvas and board, 72 x 12 in. Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.



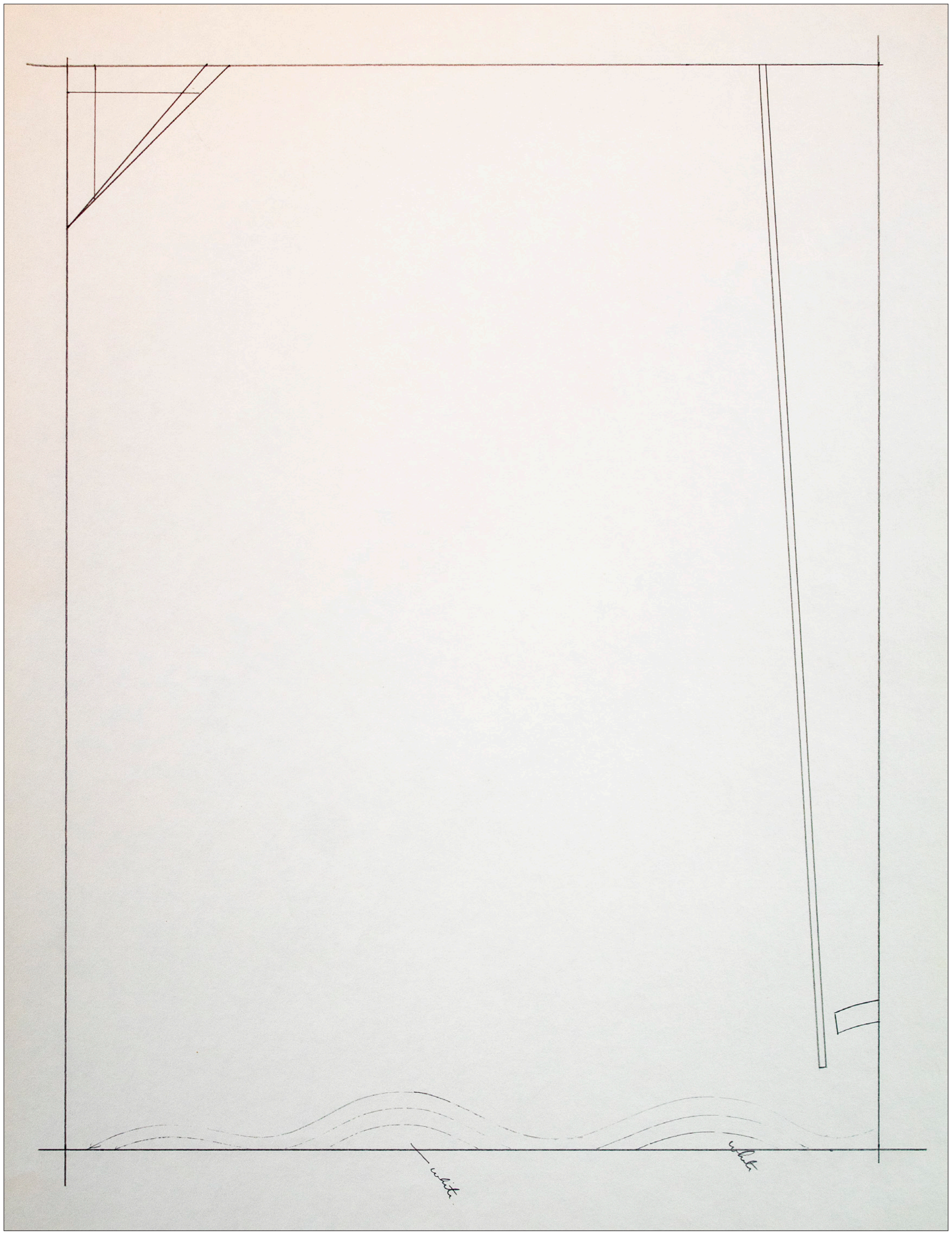
Ibis III

1984. Acrylic on canvas and board, 72 x 12 in. Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



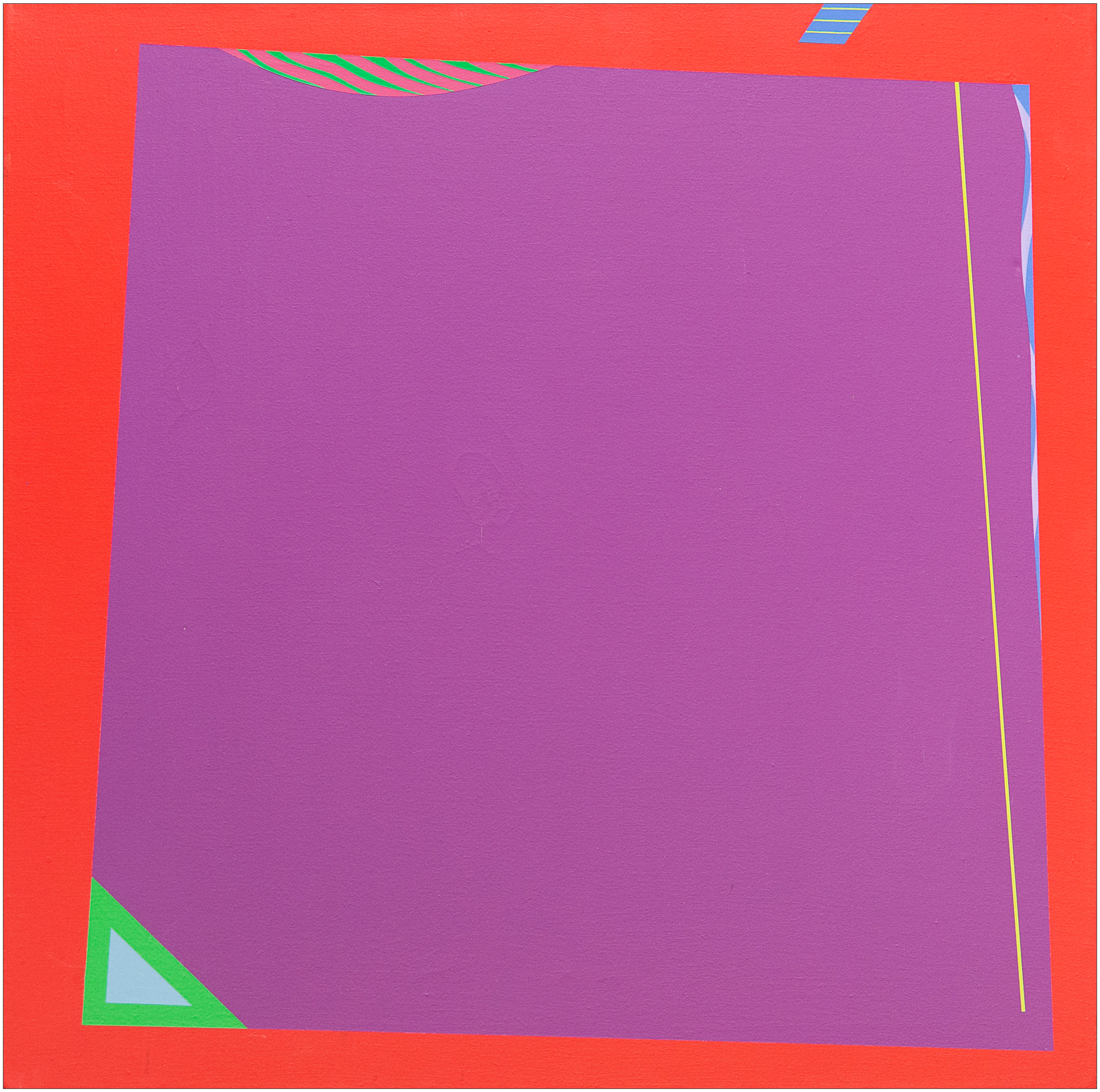
Thasos

1984. Acrylic on canvas, 67 x 67 in.
Teacher Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.


white
white

Study for a Painting

Probably 1983 or 1984. Graphite on paper, 23 x 19 in.



Edge

1984. Acrylic on canvas, 25 x 25 in.
Collection of David and Tracy Wintroub.

Omaha World-Herald, January 24, 1983

Lawyer Robert Kutak Dies On Trip to Shop for Art at Age 50

Omaha attorney Robert J. Kutak, founding and presiding partner of Nebraska's largest law firm, Kutak Rock & Huie, died Sunday in Minneapolis after suffering an apparent heart attack. He was 50.

Robert J. Kutak

Kutak artworks hang on the walls of his office . . . This photo was taken at the Woodmen Tower, before the firm moved its quarters in the Omaha Building.

Kutak, an avid art collector, was in Minneapolis to examine paintings, according to a spokesman for the firm in Omaha.

Dean Pohlenz, the firm's director of research, said Kutak collapsed on the street about noon after coming out of the Lumber Exchange Building in downtown Minneapolis. He was pronounced dead on arrival at the Hennepin County Medical Center. An autopsy has been ordered.

Kutak, 4903 California St., was traveling with University of Nebraska at Omaha art professor Peter Hill at the time of his death. They were viewing paintings Kutak was considering for the firm's Washington office, Pohlenz said.

Together with Harold L. Rock and William G. Campbell, Kutak founded the law firm in Omaha in 1965. It now has 180 lawyers with offices in Atlanta and Denver, as well as Washington and Omaha.

In 1981, before the firm closed offices in Minneapolis and Los Angeles, the firm ranked as the 32nd largest in the United States. . . .

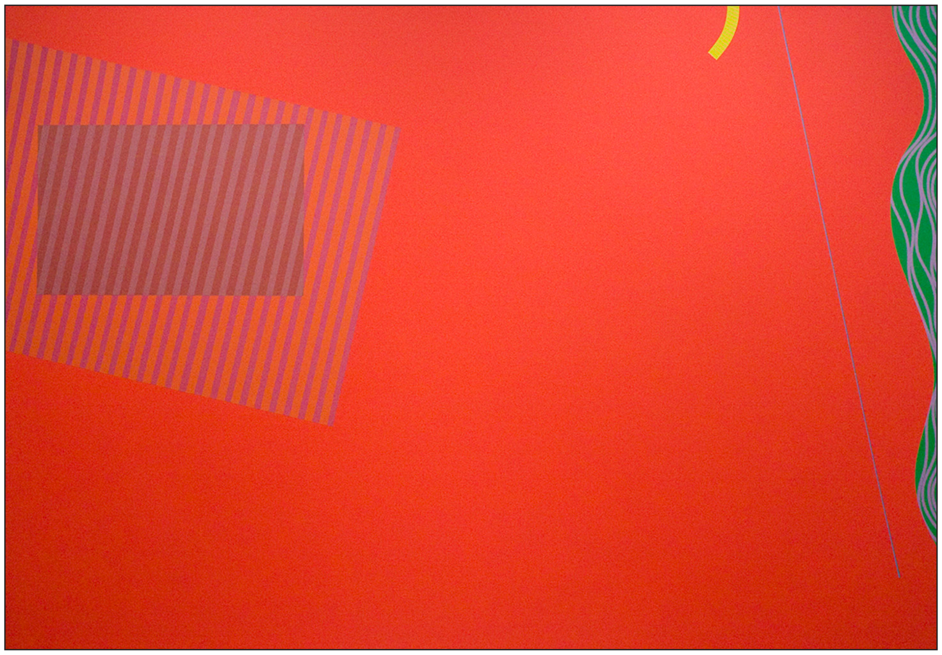
A Chicago native, Kutak was a 1955 honor graduate of the University of Chicago Law School. He was nationally known in judicial circles, particularly in recent years for his leadership in drafting the proposed new code of ethics for the legal profession. . . .

A renowned art collector, Kutak had what has been described as one of the most extensive collections of contemporary art in Omaha. Many of the works are displayed at the law offices in the refurbished Omaha Building, 17th and Farnam Streets.

The collection of art includes more than 600 paintings, graphics and sculptures at the Omaha office. The firm's Denver and Washington D.C., offices also contain works of art.

Omaha World-Herald, January 15, 1984

Peter Hill's Joslyn Paintings Are So Bright They Shout



Erebus, 1983. Acrylic on canvas, 59 x 84 in.

Bright hues blast from several big works in his one-man show at the Joslyn Art Museum Rental and Sales Gallery.

That means 240 square feet of almost uninterrupted orange or about 340 square feet of piercing yellow.

And in the middle, obliterating all others, is an immense, 400-square-foot expanse of a red-orange so bright I had to use sunglasses to look at it.

Hill, the esteemed University of Nebraska at Omaha authority on hard-edged acrylic abstraction, has been working in recent years on grid patterns in which contrasting color weaves in and out, either lapping in waves along the edges or snaking through the center in wire-thin curves.

Dazzling

Only one of the 10 new works at Joslyn Art uses the grid, however.

And "Erebus," despite the indications given in the bland black-and-white reproduction of it on the show's invitation, is as bold and aggressive in its use of color as anything in the show.

It dazzles through the interplay of ultrabright red against a similarly bright blue. The color clash causes a vibration so intense you can almost hear the hum.

The other big canvases, named after marginal squiggles or characters from mythology, are free from the constrictions of the grid and fly out in solid assertions of color.

As in earlier Hill paintings, the vast expanses are interrupted by an occasional wavy line of contrasting color at the edge as in a Morris Louis painting or punctuated by passing squibs of candy cane or striped trapezoids.

It all looks quite casual, these intersections of curves and dotted lines, but they are expertly arranged to offset the large negative spaces.

Acrylic Panels

Along with the square 5-foot canvases, Hill has included some interesting acrylic works on panels that stretch out 6 feet long but stand only a foot high. And there are a couple of works that seem to billow up, like smoke, when displayed at 7 feet high and only a foot wide.

In all of his work, the colors are applied with exacting, uncompromising edges. Some insets of color are so thick and precise they stand out in relief as if they were thick vinyl strips affixed over the canvas.

It goes without saying that Hill, winner of the Joslyn Biennial in 1978 and 1982, avoids the kind of common sloppiness and inexact executions that make so many attempts at hard-edged painting miserable.

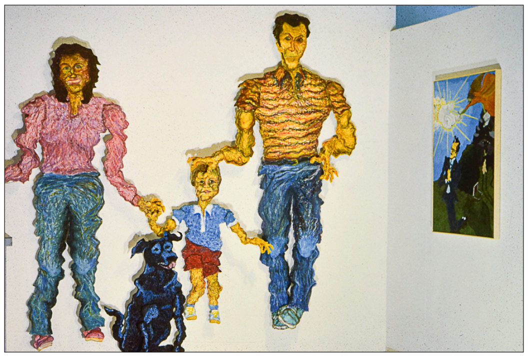
Professor Hill has been playing around (in a very serious way) with these colors and shapes for some time.

But it seems that in the last few years, his brand of splashy colors, bold geometry and stripes has caught on in the world of fashion and commercial design.

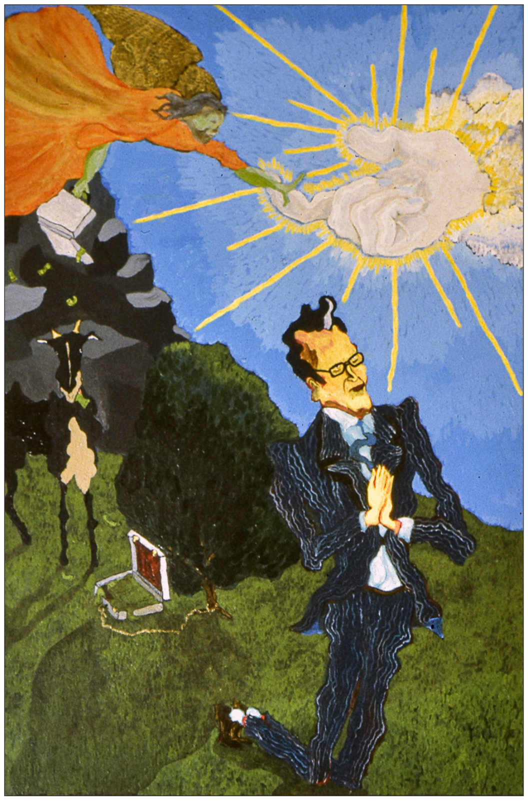
So I imagine that mini-skirted new-wave girls at nearby Central or other high schools might flip over his new work, creating a potential new audience to join the legions of admirers.

The one-man show continues through Feb. 26.

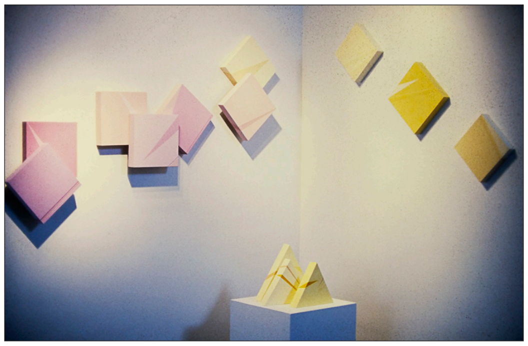
Student Work, Early-to-mid 1980s



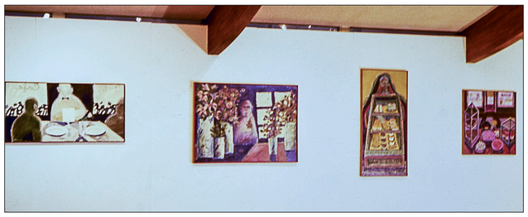
Wendy Wiggs, date unknown



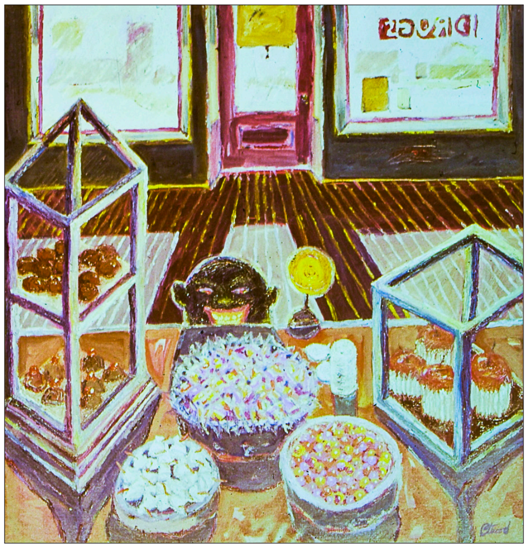
Wendy Wiggs, date unknown



Marjorie Shipp, 1984



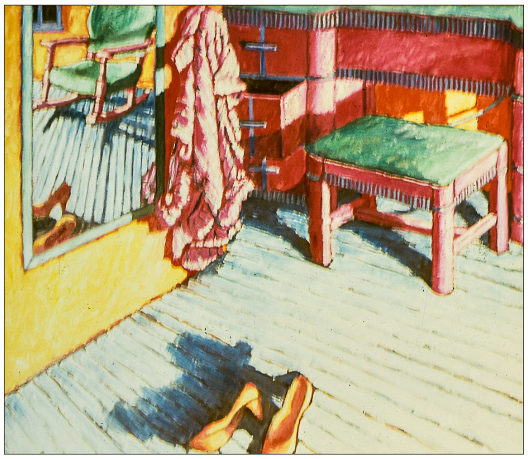
Lonn Atwood, 1984, oil



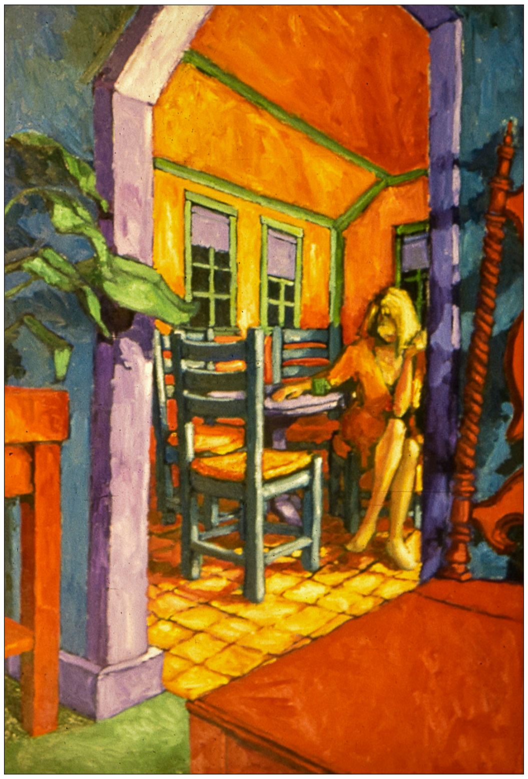
Lonn Atwood, 1984, oil

Janet Spring (paintings)
and Izen Ratzlaff (sculptures), 1984

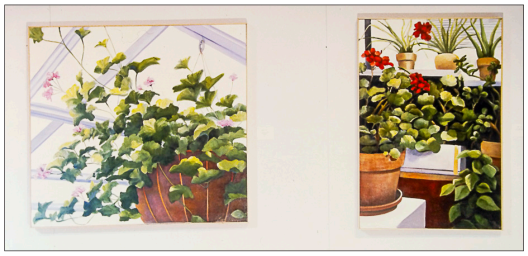
Left: C. Paciotti; right: Janet Spring



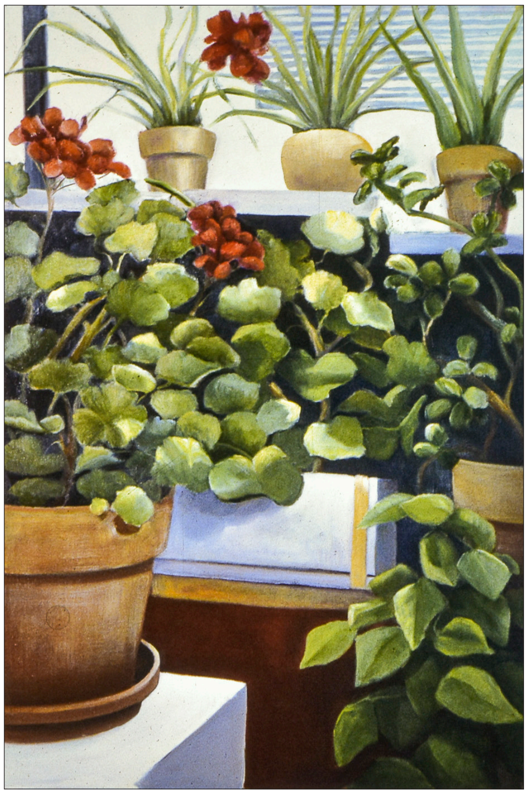
C. Paciotti, 1984, oil



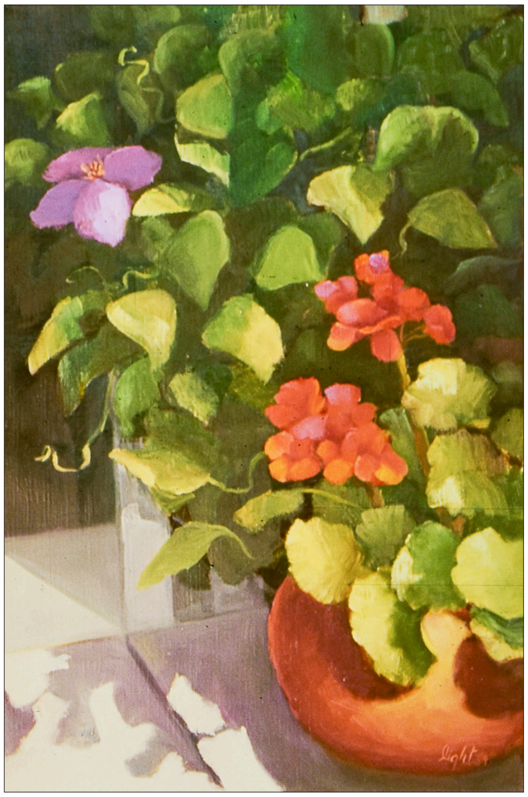
C. Paciotti, 1986



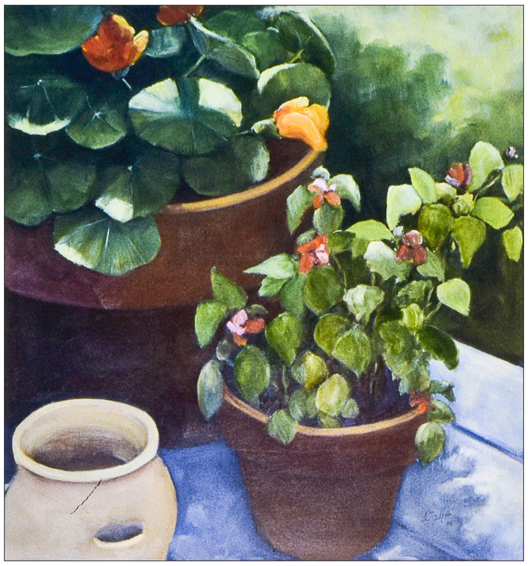
Nancy Light, 1984, oil



Nancy Light, 1985, oil

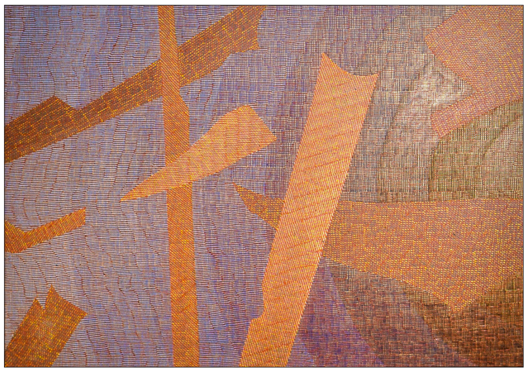


Nancy Light, 1984, oil

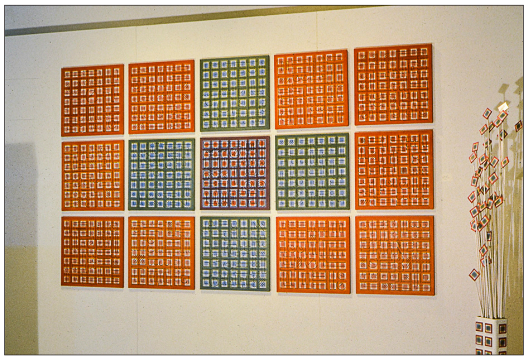


Nancy Light, 1985, oil

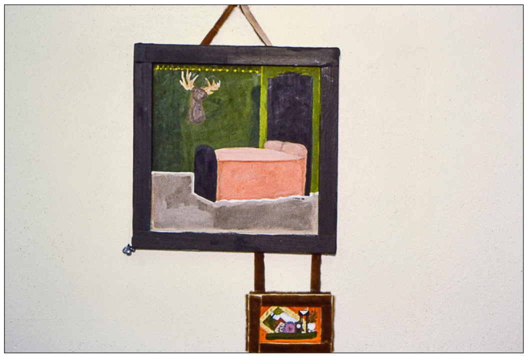
Stuart Wheat



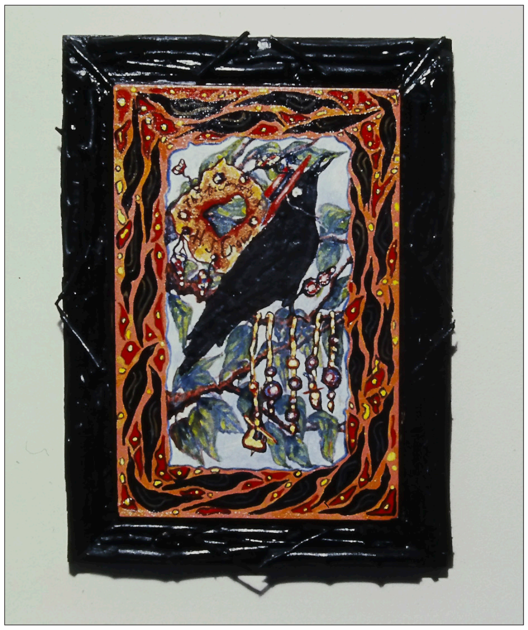
Stuart Wheat



Shane Haley, 1987



Kathy Wisler, 1985



Jennifer Sawboda, 1987

Remembrance by Kathlene D'Agosta Wisler

I had just gotten done with a graphics art degree. I kept hearing from my friend Debbie Vacek about the fun and interesting art professor at UNO, Peter Hill. I wasn't ready to work 9 to 5, and I needed fine art in my life, so I took a painting class. Peter did not disappoint. If I wasn't at work or sleeping, I was in my corner at UNO, painting. Peter told me that I was like a blind person seeing for the first time, and that I could do my thesis now, even though it was only my first semester. His guidance was always kind and insightful.

I have several fond memories of Peter—some brief, others longer.

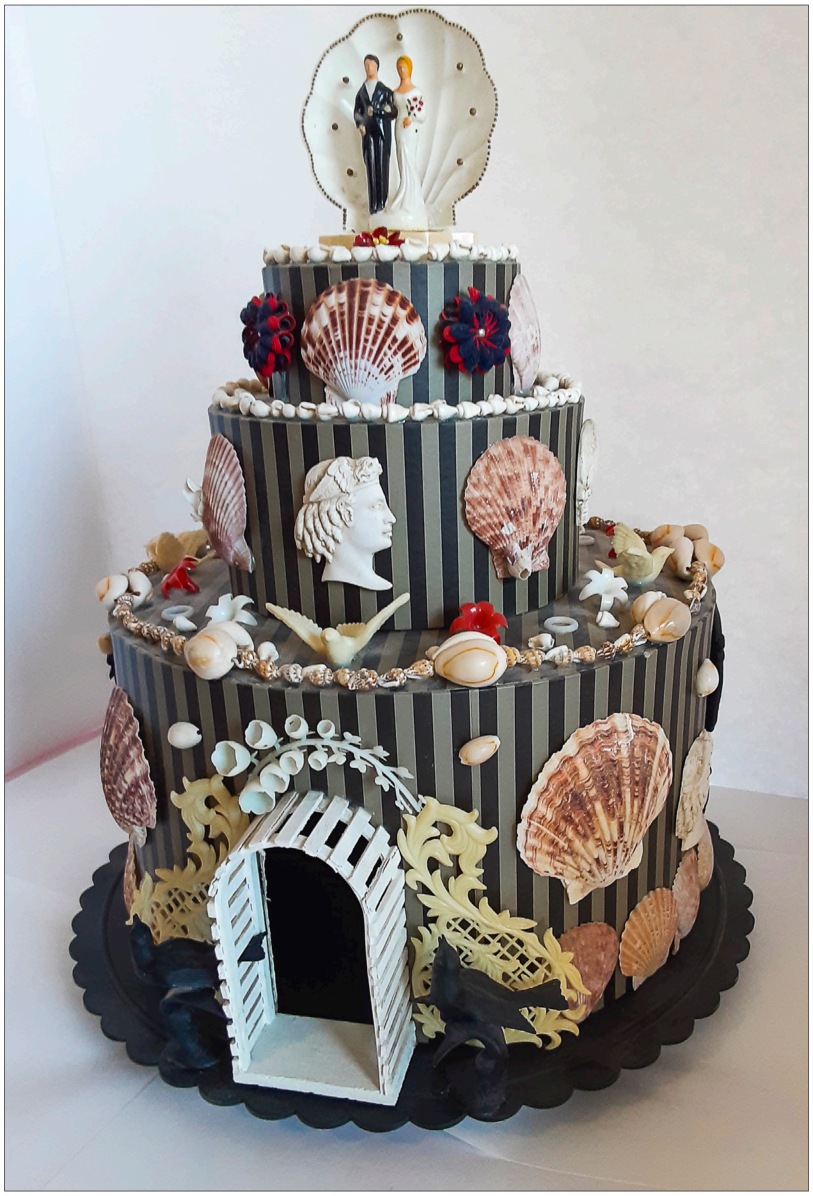
Peter would look at my work and give me the names of artists to look up.

Some of his favorite sayings were "curiously enough" and "truth is stranger than fiction."

I was telling Peter about someone in my life who had passed away. Peter told me: Kathy, you hit an age, and it just starts happening. It was true!

I was in my art corner in class, and Peter walked in. Another student was painting a really bad painting of a rabbit. Peter looked at the painting, smiled with that sparkle in his eyes, cocked his head and said, "You can't do that, it's already been done." Then he walked away.

We took a class field trip to the art gallery to view the Jim Nutt show. Showing were small graphite drawings. As we were walking through the gallery, a young man piped up, "Well, I could do drawings like this," and it was not in a complimentary tone. Peter told him, "Well, maybe you should go back to the studio and do just that." In my opinion, I thought it was a great show. As a class we would all go to the Bohemian Cafe. We were so cool because our kind professor, Peter Hill, would join us for dinner and talk about art.



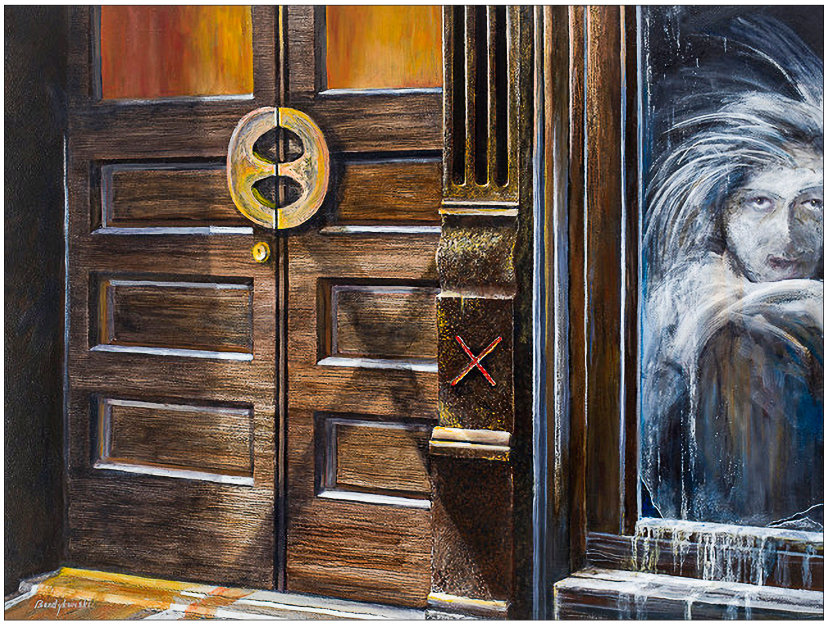
Kathlene D'Agosta Wisler. *Mouse Trap #2*, early 2000s. Mixed media: plastic, paint, wood, plaster, and shells; 15 inches tall and 12 inches wide.

An art professor from Chicago came to UNO for a residency. She came into class, we talked, and she looked at my work. Peter came to me later and told me that she was impressed and thought I should receive a scholarship. I had been in college many years while working at the *Omaha World-Herald*. I felt like I needed a life in a cubicle. I did not feel like I would make a good teacher. The one regret I have in life was not listening to Peter when he told me that I should become a college professor.

As I look back and think about Peter, he was about family, art, the cabin in Canada, and guiding artists to be their best. Being at UNO in the 1980s was a very special time in my life. I look back and will always remember the sparkle in his eyes, his grin, and—most of all—his kindness and love for art that he shared.

Remembrance by Steve Bendykowski

Steve Bendykowski began drawing as soon as he could hold a pencil and has pursued his passion for art and artmaking all of his life. He has taught college and exhibited his works in many galleries. Steve is now a full-time artist who has made a deliberate choice to live and paint in obscurity. Without pressure to sell or exhibit, he is free to paint according to his own vision and convictions; you can find his works at bendykowski.art. In his own words: "It is such a blessing to be able to use the gifts my creator gave me and become the artist I always wanted to be."



Steve Bendykowski. *Temptation for the Masses.*
Oil on panel, 24 x 18 in.

Peter Hill in 2018 with Steve Bendykowski and Steve's wife Pat, daughter Sarah, and granddaughter Sloane.

What I appreciate most about Peter Hill is how he used his vast knowledge of art history to teach me what it meant to be an artist. This caused problems at times when all I wanted was for him to show me how to create a certain effect.

One day in class I called Peter over to my easel and explained that I could not consistently mix the colors I wanted and asked for help. With compassion he looked at me and said, "This is something you must work out on your own." Frustrated, I opened the window and threw my painting out to the ground below. The classroom went silent. Peter took out his grade book and said, "You are beginning to understand. I am giving you an A on that painting." Furious, I walked out and did not go back to college for seven years.

Years later, when I finished my degrees and began teaching college myself, I began to appreciate his wisdom. He could have shown me how to mix colors, but he knew I needed something far more important. He was teaching me to become the artist that he knew I could become.

After Kutak: 1985 to 1989

Bob Kutak's death undoubtedly affected Dad deeply, but he didn't talk to me about it much. My father was a friendly man, but he had only a few close friends, and Bob was one of them. Dad didn't dwell, but on those occasions when the topic of life and purpose would come up—usually while fishing—he'd return to the fact that Bob died at 50 and his own mother died at 56, both absolutely out of the blue. His point: Time is all we have, and nobody knows when it's up, so wasting it is dumb. Dad wasn't dumb; he knew better than most how to use his time.

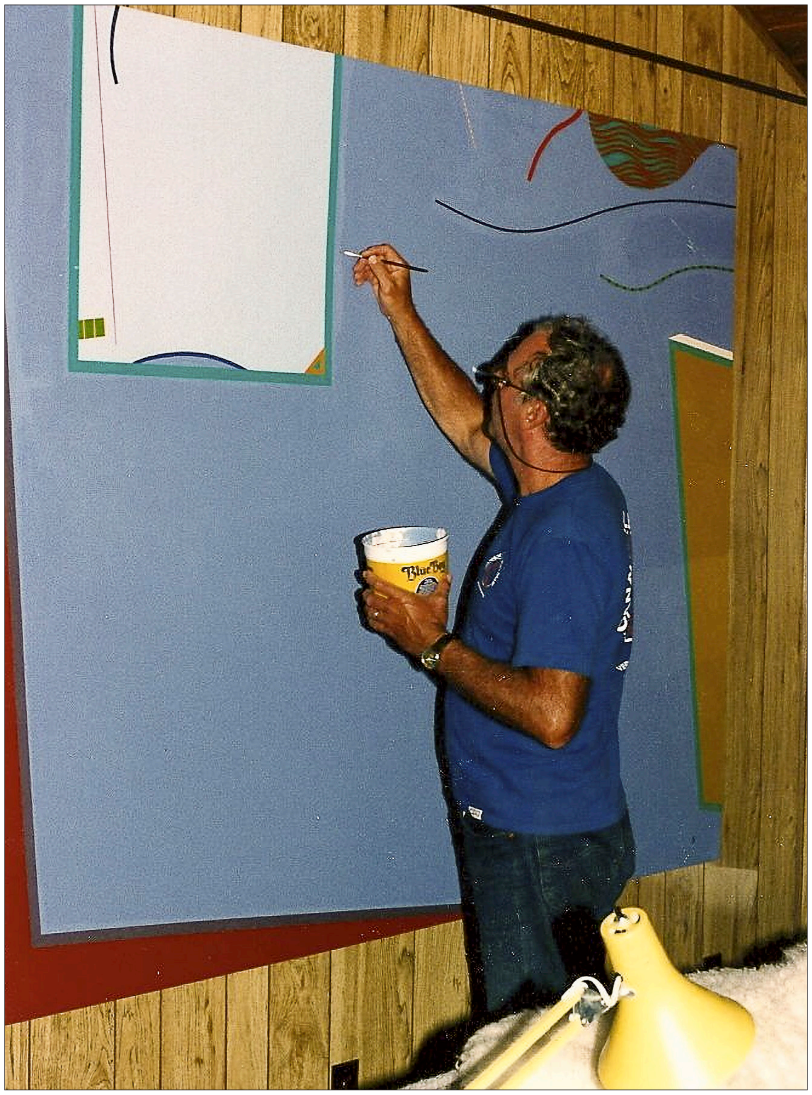
Losing Bob also meant losing his biggest patron and booster. Dad continued selling through various venues (the Joslyn, the Sheldon, Anderson-O'Brien Art Gallery). He also had a couple of shows: one at Peru State College in 1986 and another at the Joslyn in 1987. But when you look at his ledgers, you can see the differences from earlier years. Sales were dry.

He was accepting of the reduced income, though. He would have liked to have sold more—who wouldn't?—but sales were not the source of his self-worth. What mattered most to him—I would hear this many times (again, in the boat)—was his dedication to his students and the integrity of his artmaking. He cared deeply about his students—the quality of their work and the trajectories of their careers. If you've been reading the remembrances, you know that several of his students went on from UNO to Cranbrook, a fact he savored. Many students became artists, teachers, and curators with long careers of their own. For these reasons, the university honored him in 1987 with a "Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award," declaring that "he has affected more lives of young artists from this area than anyone else in the field."

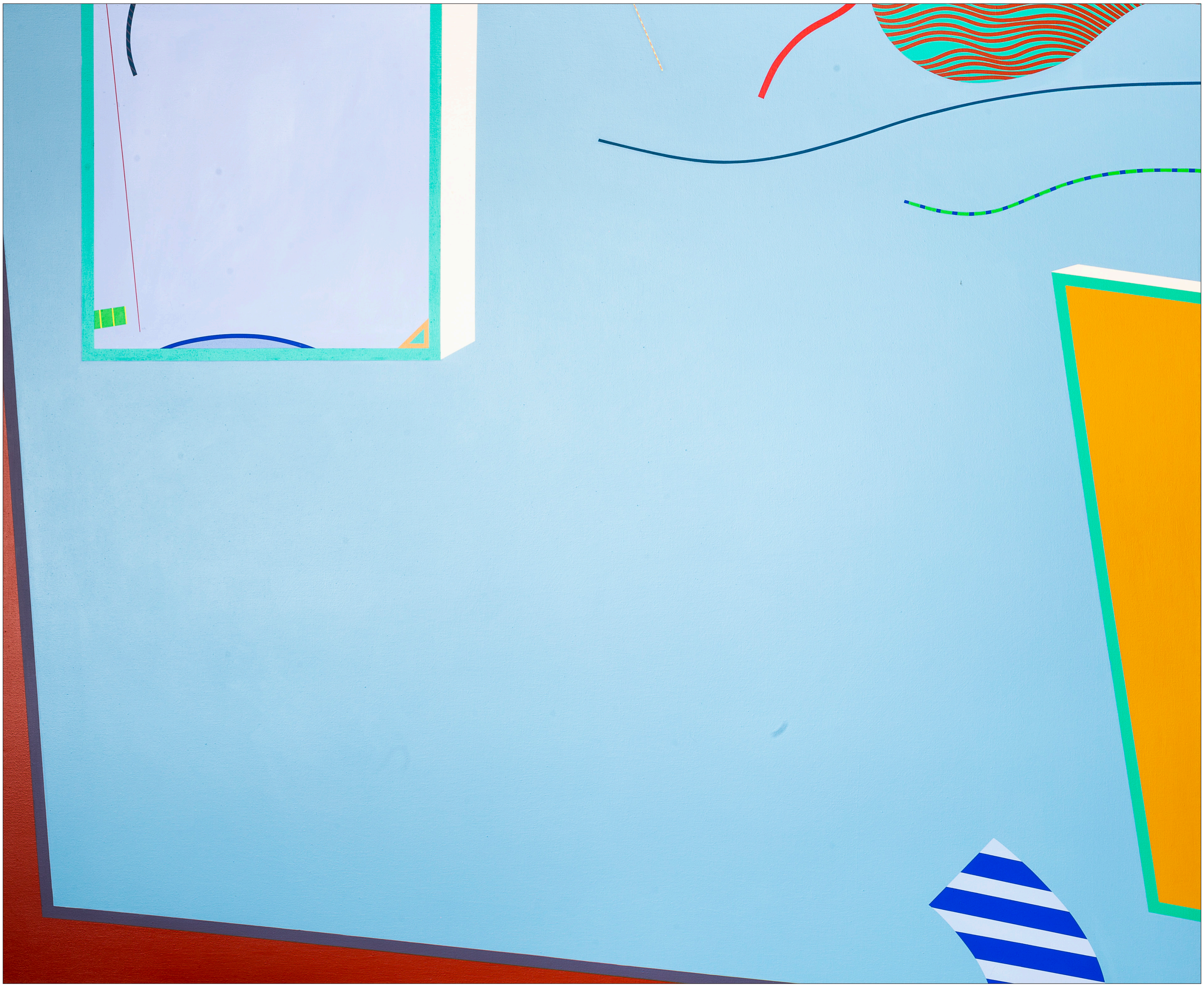
As for his artmaking, he meant what he said in that April 1978 interview with the *Omaha World-Herald*: "I don't strive for popularity in what I do. No one who paints like I do is trying for it." In other words: I'm not painting to make money; I'm painting because I think it's important to make art, and I like making art, and I have something to say. If you like my art, that's great, and thank you. If you don't? Move along. There's plenty of other art out there.

Dad's paintings got, on average, a little smaller. The largest painting I can find from this time is the one on the facing page, which hangs in Canada and was built to cover a wall. The next largest, *Shogun* (page 362), is five by six feet. He also played around with small watercolors and mixed media, as shown earlier. And in 1989, he made a foray into sculpture, producing small and fragile wooden works.

More grandchildren came. My parents decided the cabin in Canada could use a little more room to accommodate themselves and visitors. In 1985, they had an addition to the cabin built by local master builder (and artist in his own right) Barry Penner, roughly doubling its space. That prompted my father to do something I'd never seen him do in Canada: paint a picture. To my knowledge, all of the other paintings in Canada had been carted up from Omaha.

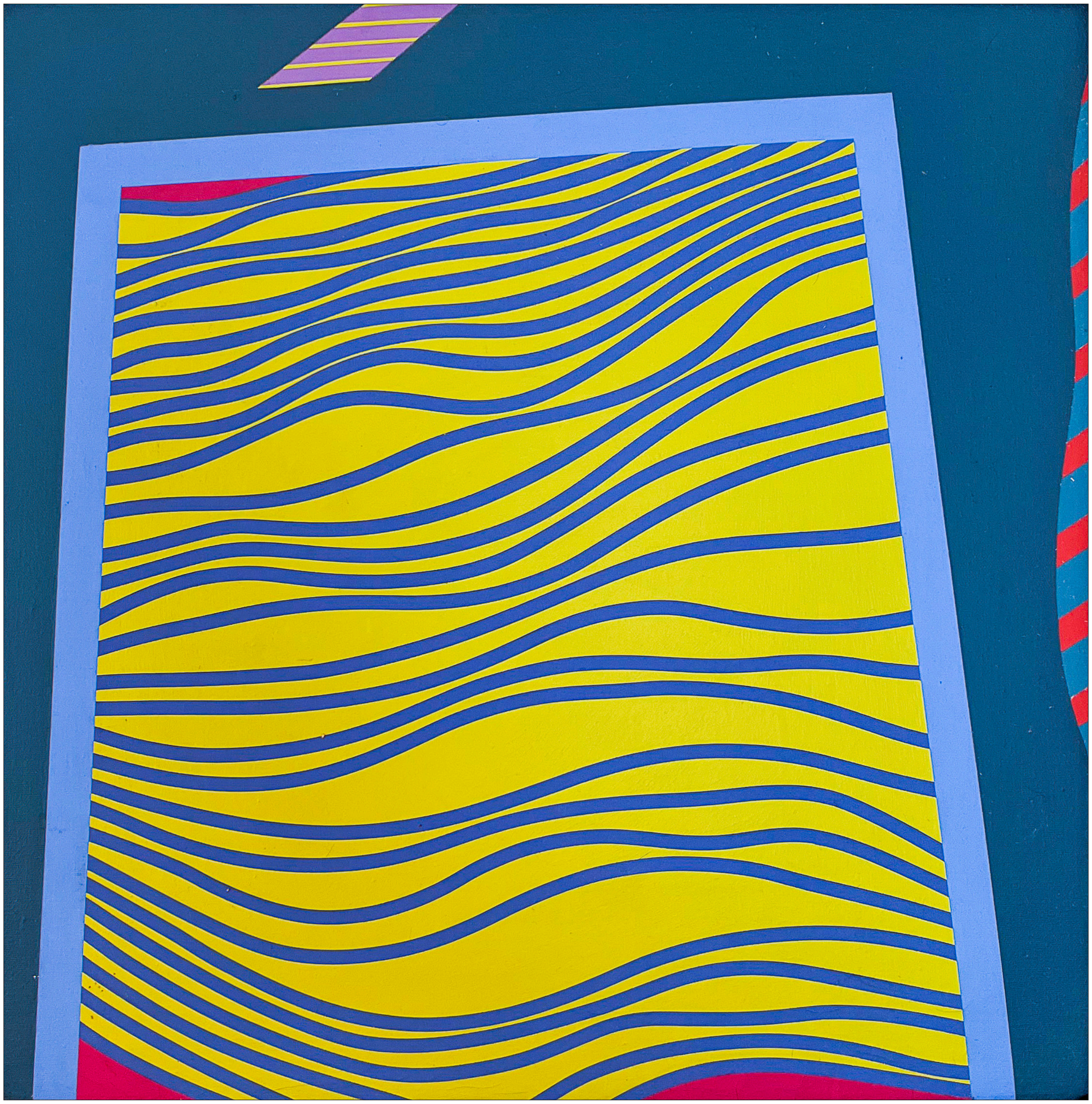


Painting in Canada, 1985



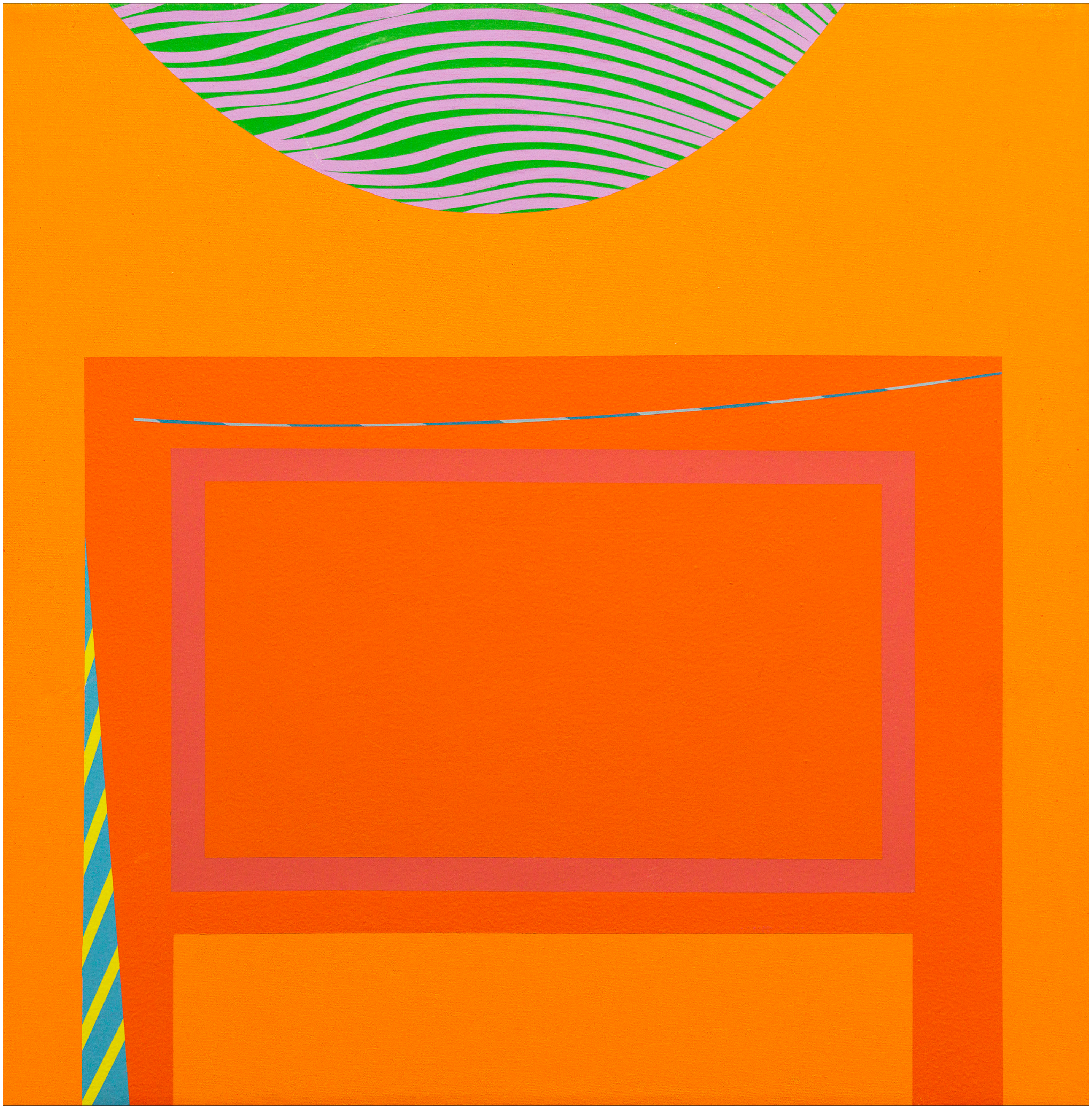
Untitled

1985. Acrylic on canvas, 64.5 x 78.5 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman. Canada.



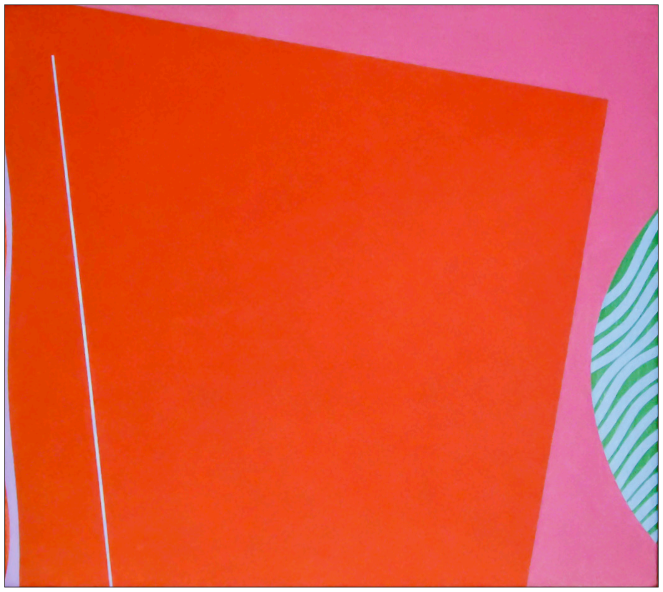
Kelp

1985. Acrylic on canvas, 19.5 x 19.5 in.
Collection of Haven and Simmy Pell.

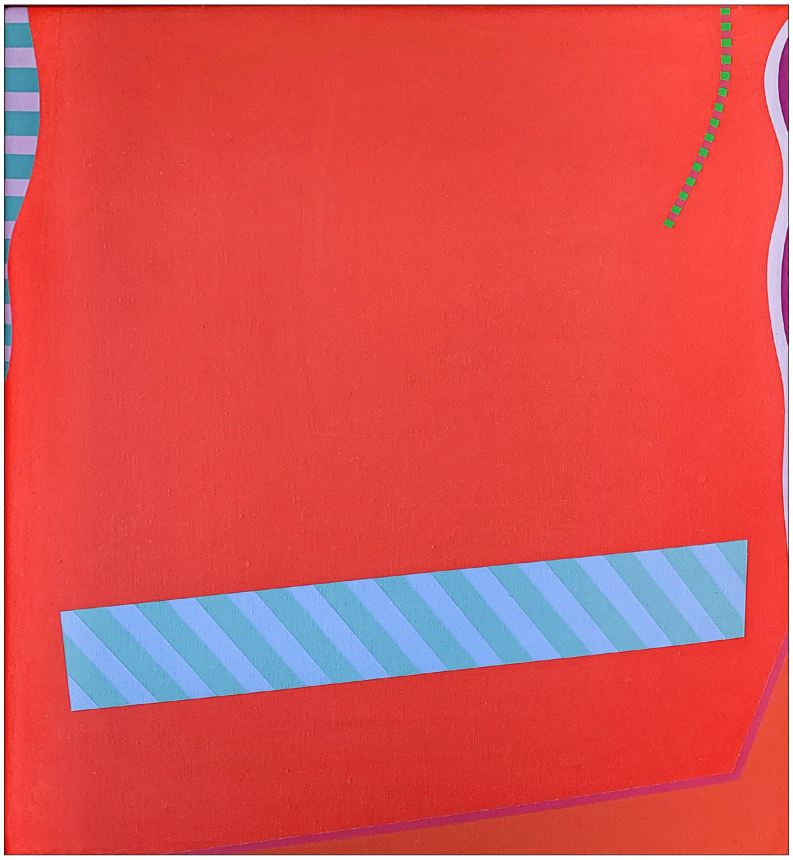


Untitled

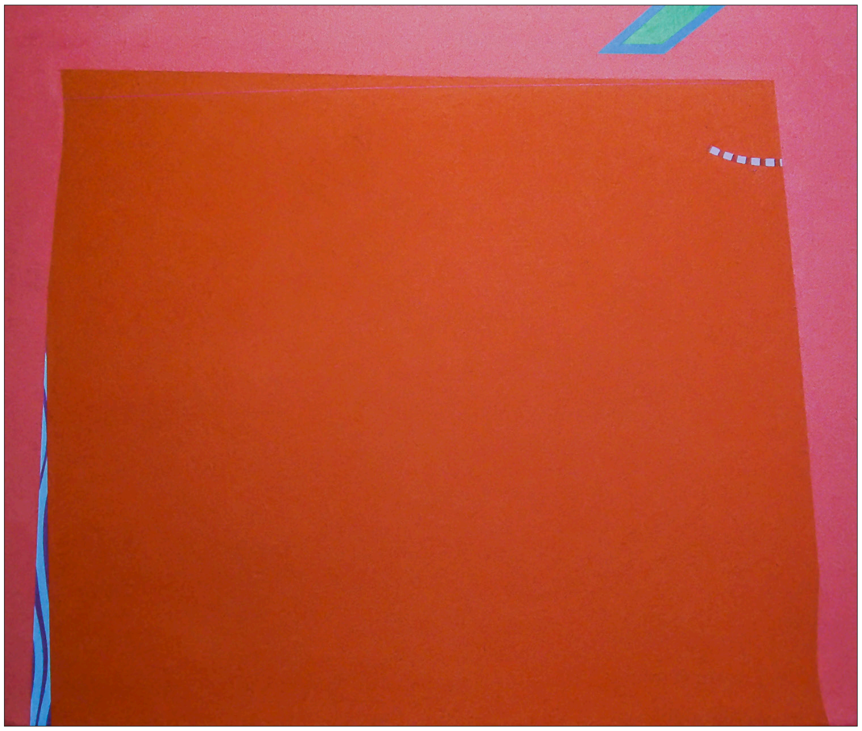
1985. Acrylic on canvas, 25 x 25 in.
Collection of David and Tracy Wintroub.



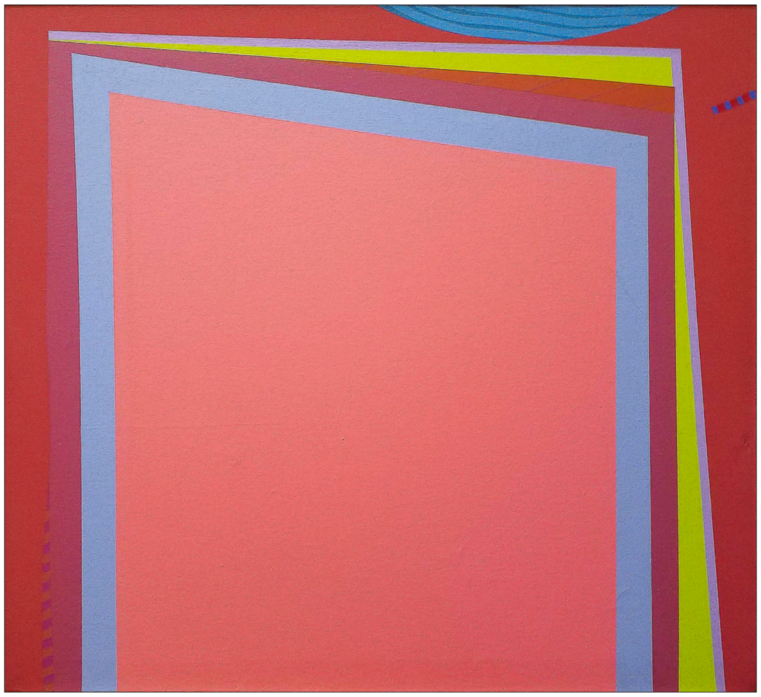
Nine-One, 1985. Acrylic on canvas, 16 x 18 in.



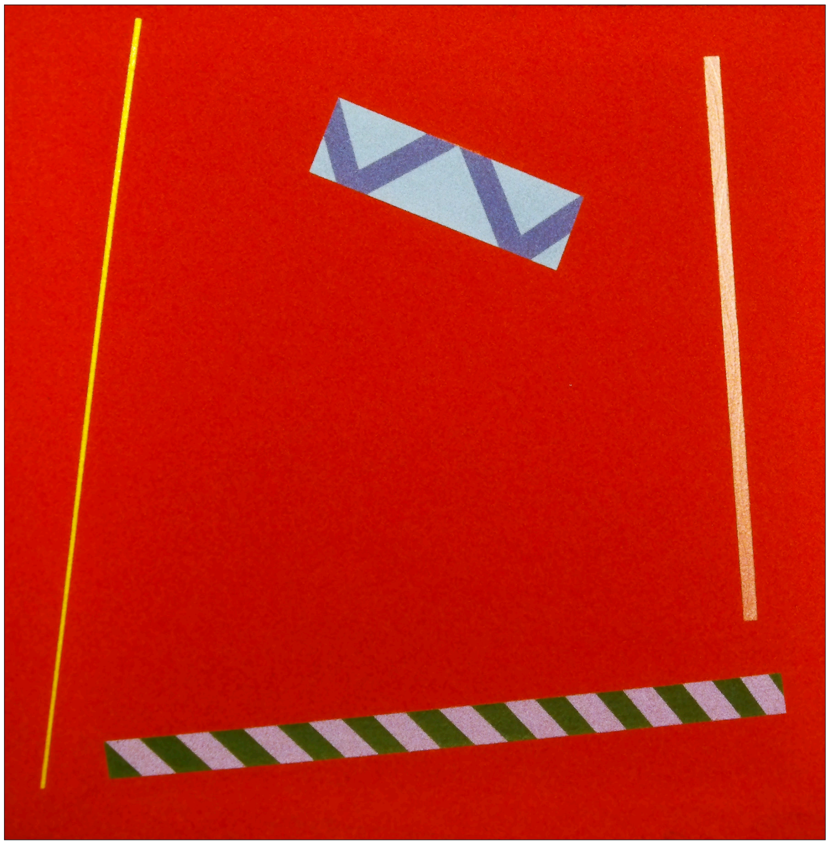
Untitled (*Conversari*), 1985. Acrylic on canvas, 26 x 24 in.
Collection of Todd ("T. J.") and Shanna Freeman.



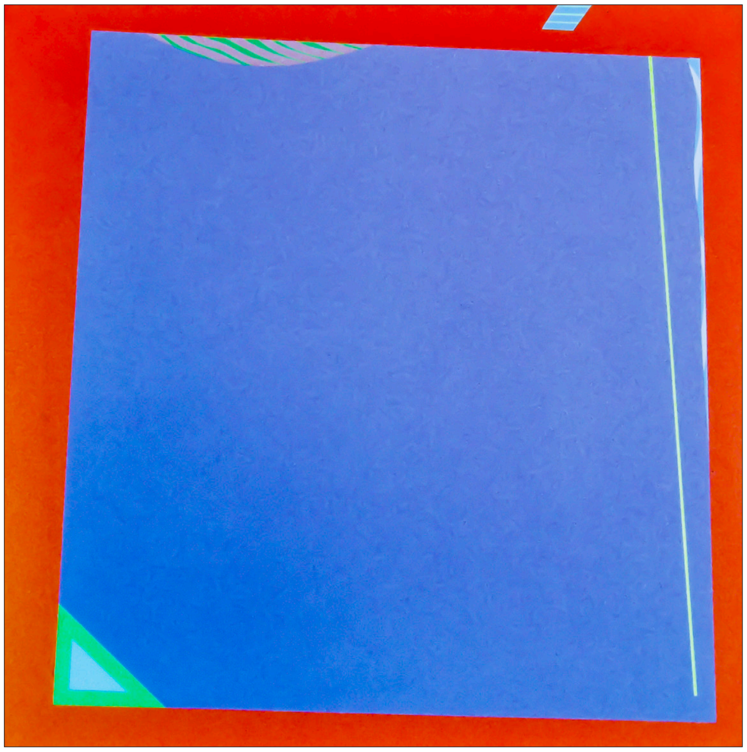
Lid I, 1985. Acrylic on canvas, 22 x 26 in.



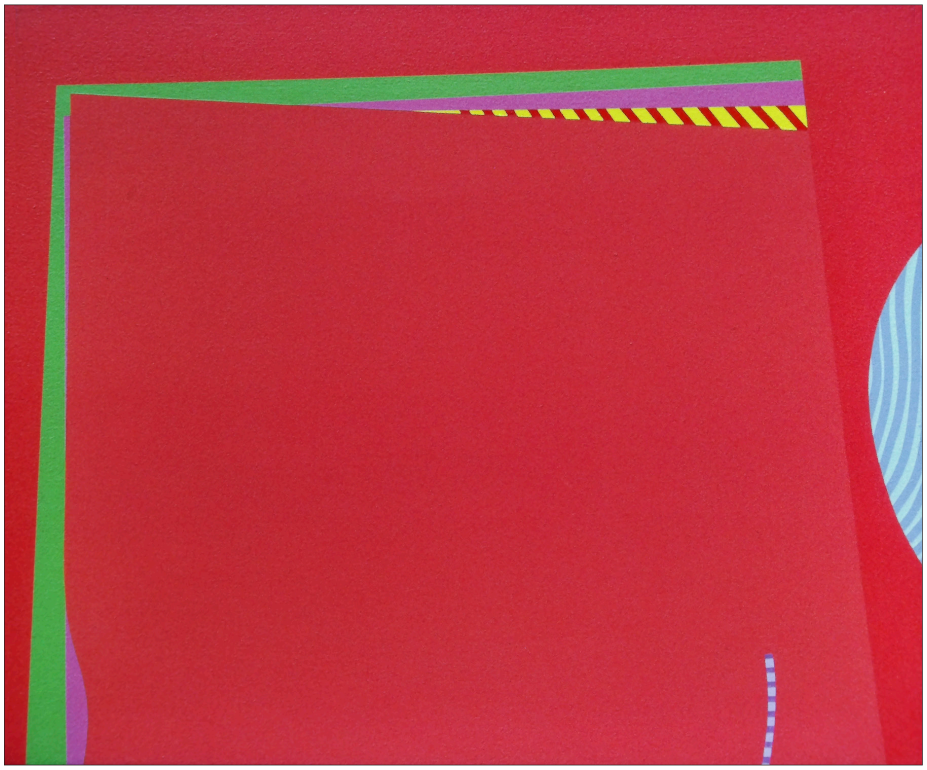
Lid II, 1985–86. Acrylic on canvas, 21 x 23 in.
Collection of Criss Library, UNO.



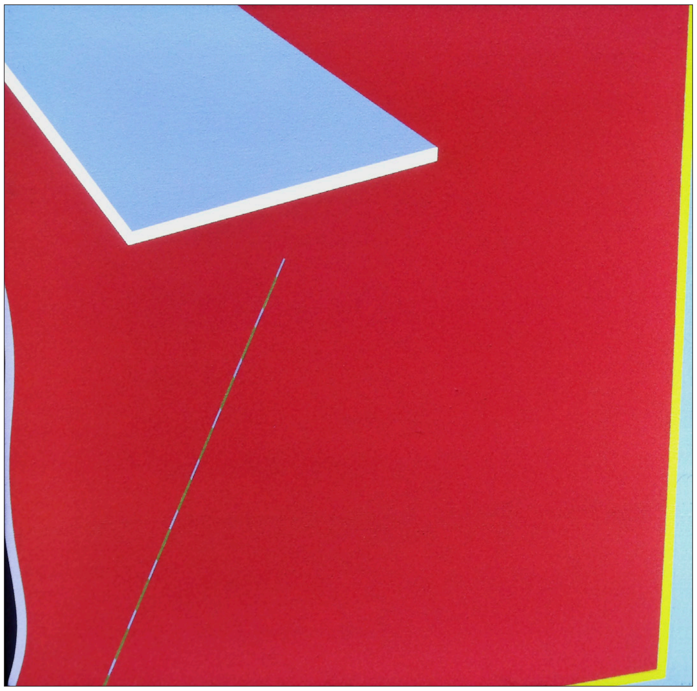
Four Pieces, 1985. Acrylic on canvas, 25 x 25 in.



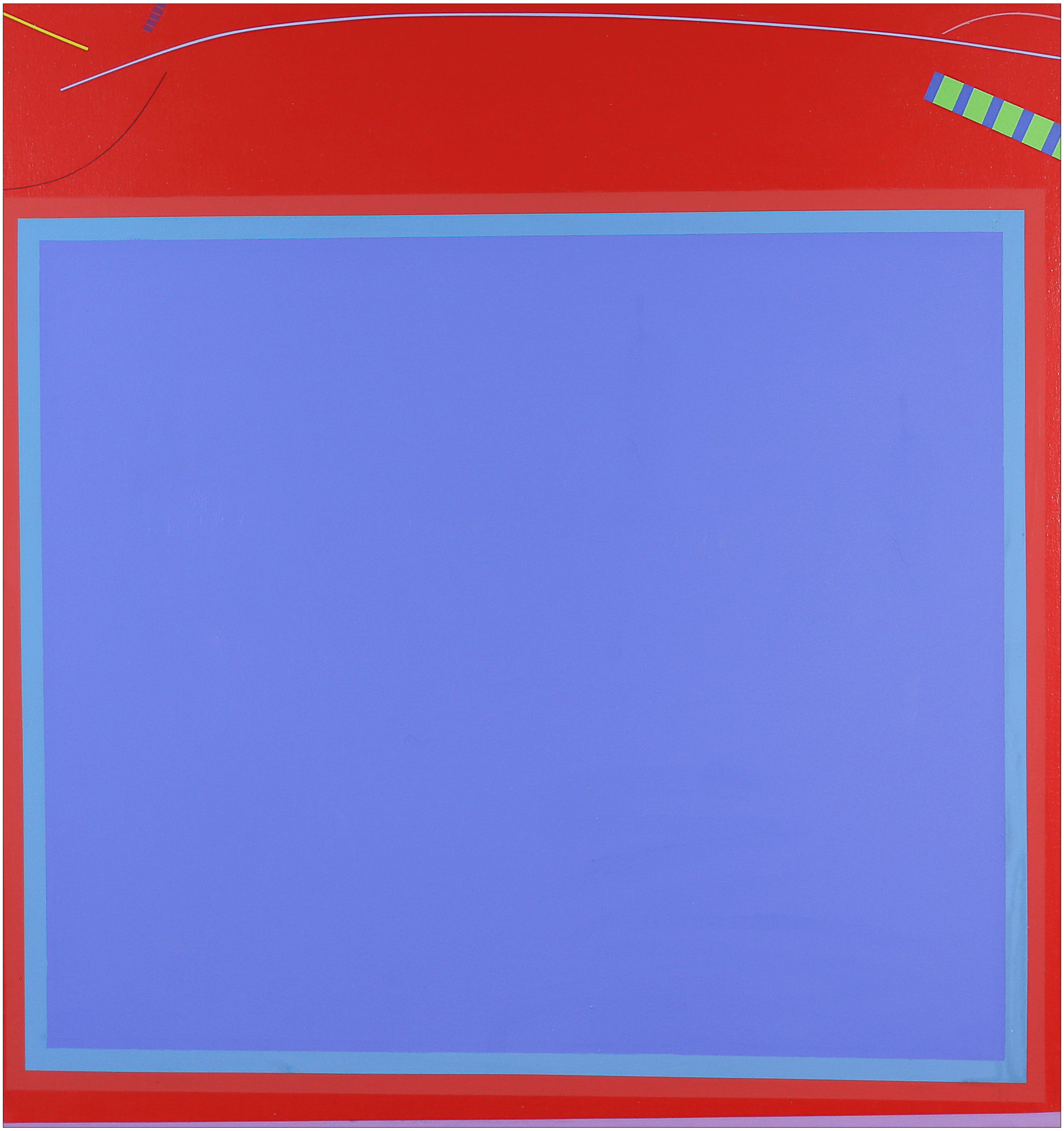
System III, 1986. Acrylic on canvas, 22 x 22.5 in.



Lid III, 1985–89. Acrylic on canvas, 23.5 x 28 in.
Collection of the University of Texas—Arlington.

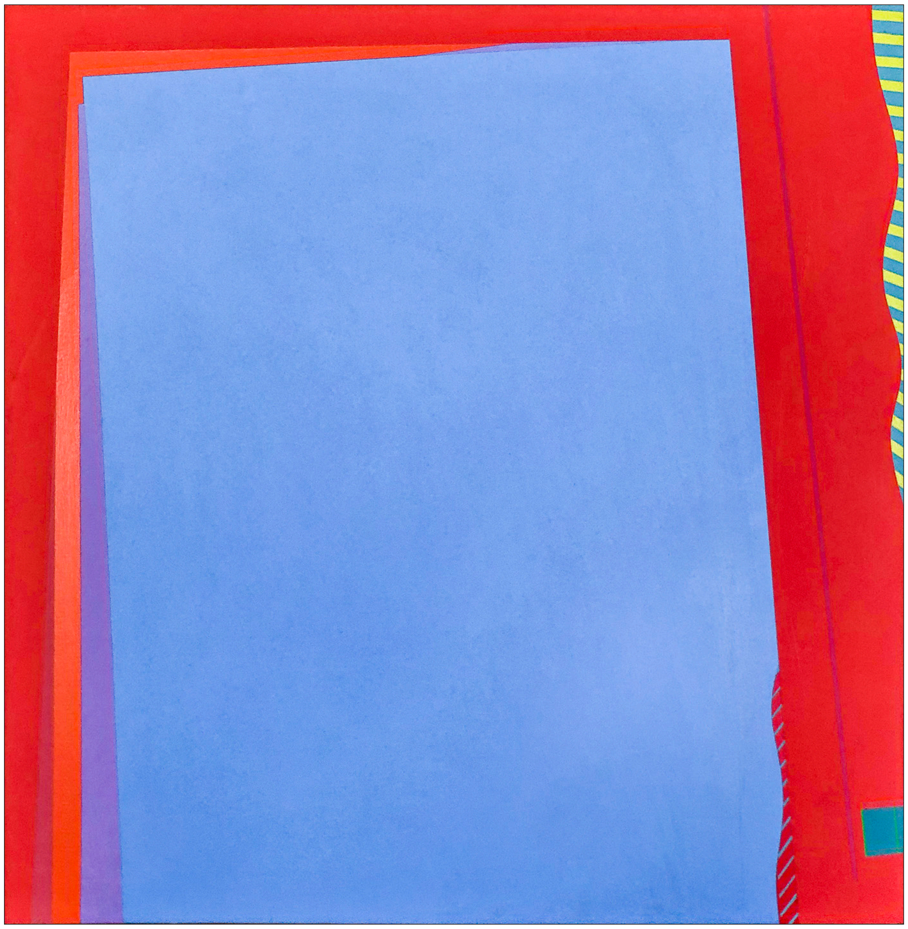


Untitled, 1986. Acrylic on canvas, 20.75 x 21 in.

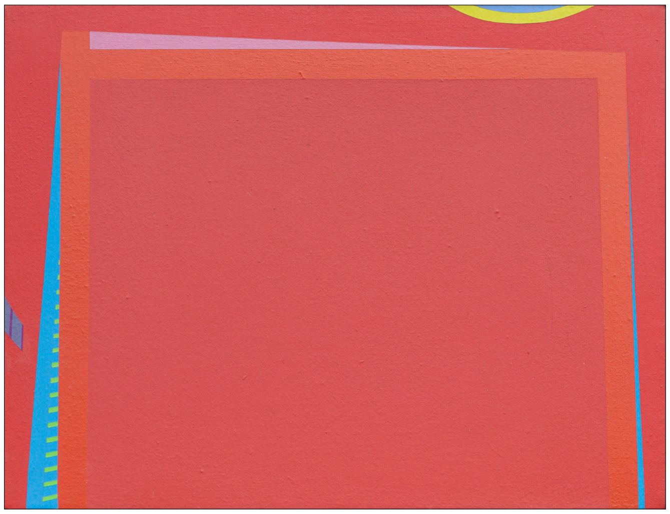


Open Blue

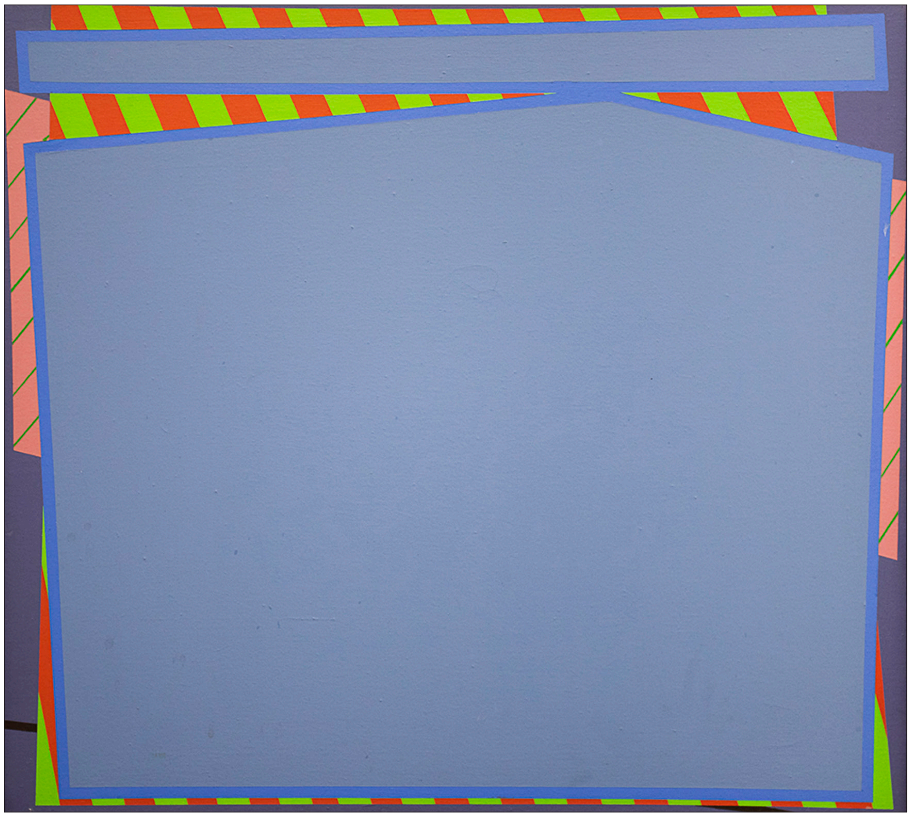
1987. Acrylic on canvas, 41 x 38 in.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.



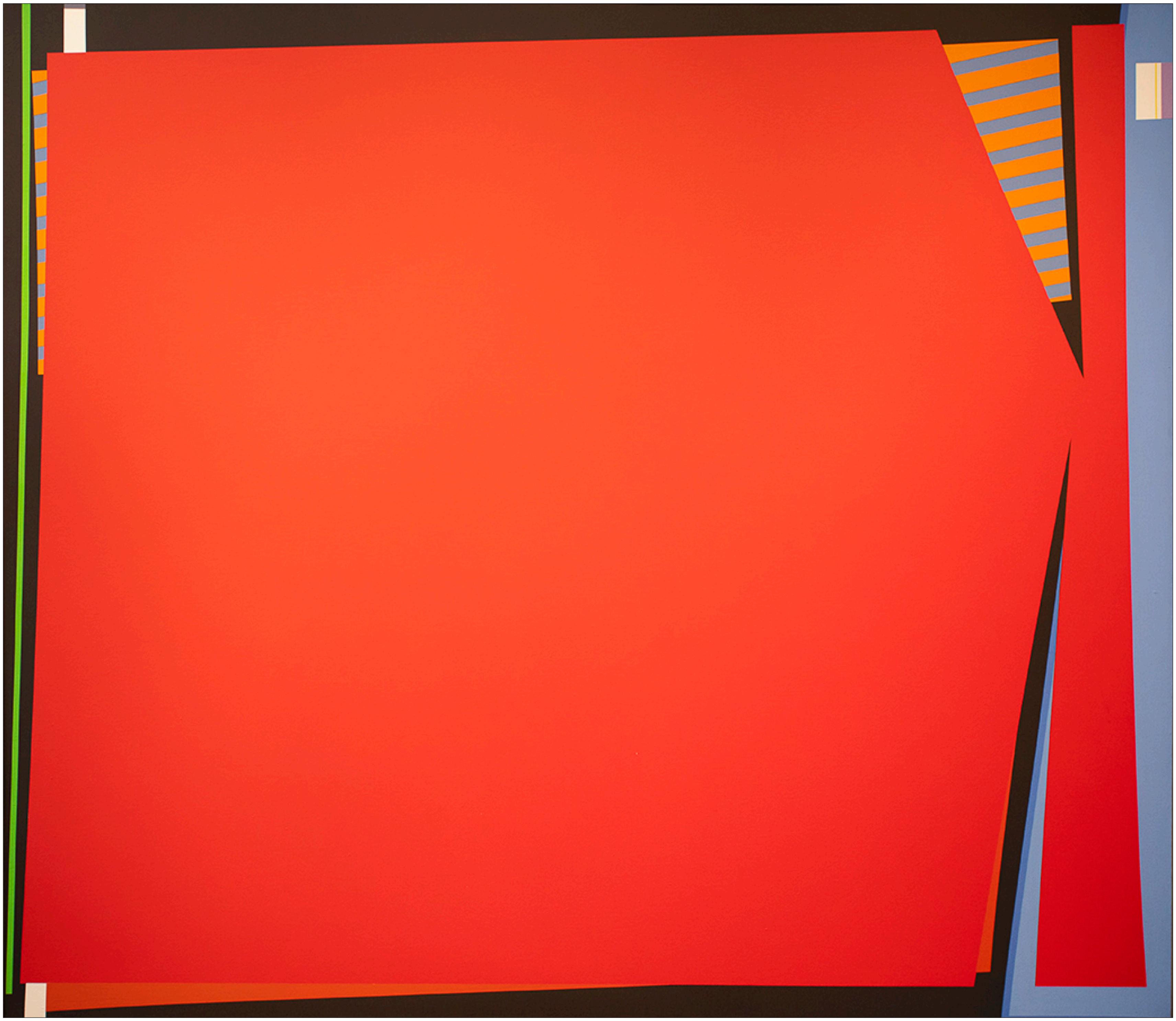
System I, 1986. Acrylic on canvas, 23.5 x 22 in.
Collection of Deborah Vacek.



System IV, 1987. Acrylic on canvas, 13 x 17 in.
Collection of Colin C. Smith.

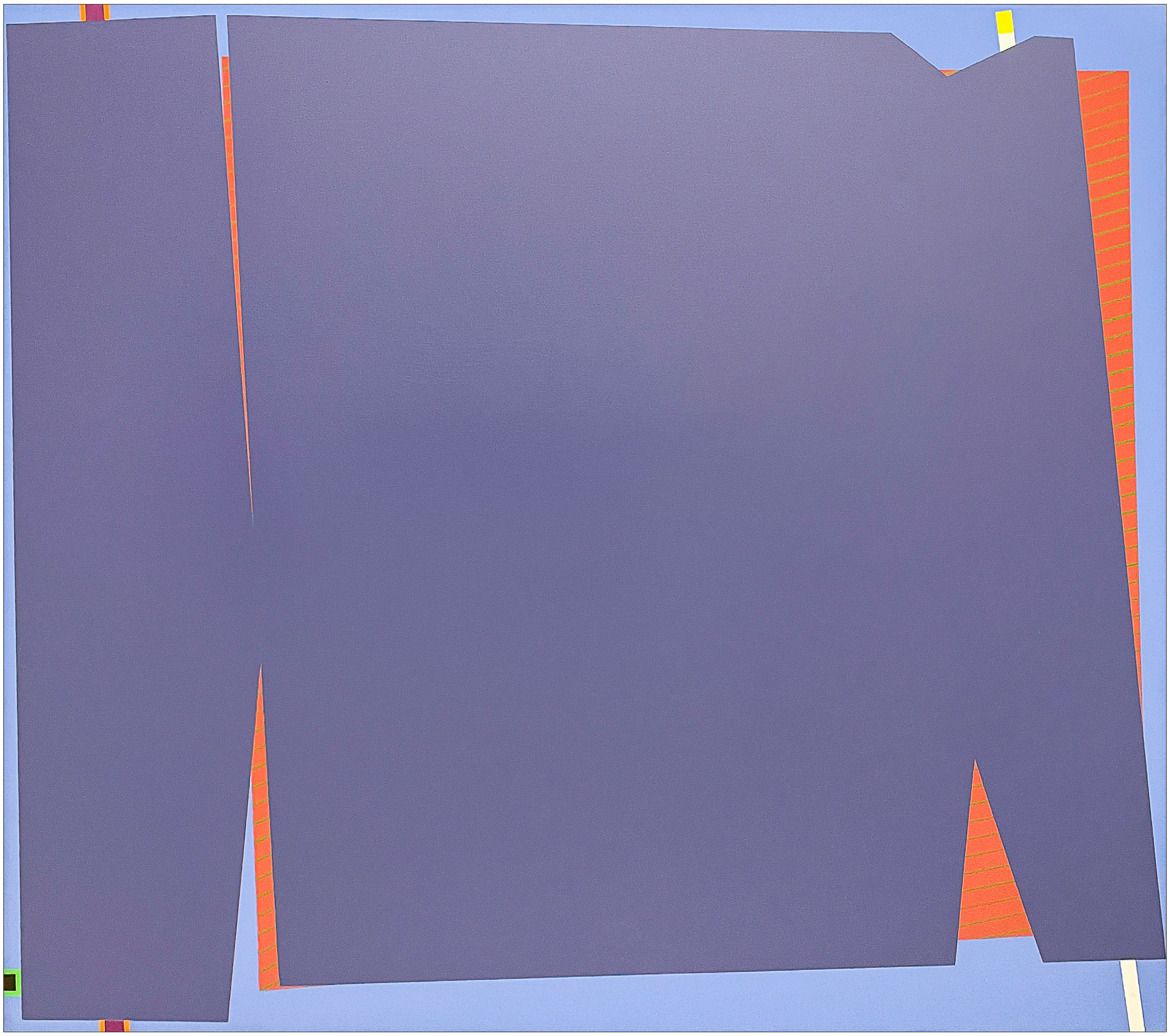


Reversion No. 1, 1988.
Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 22 in.



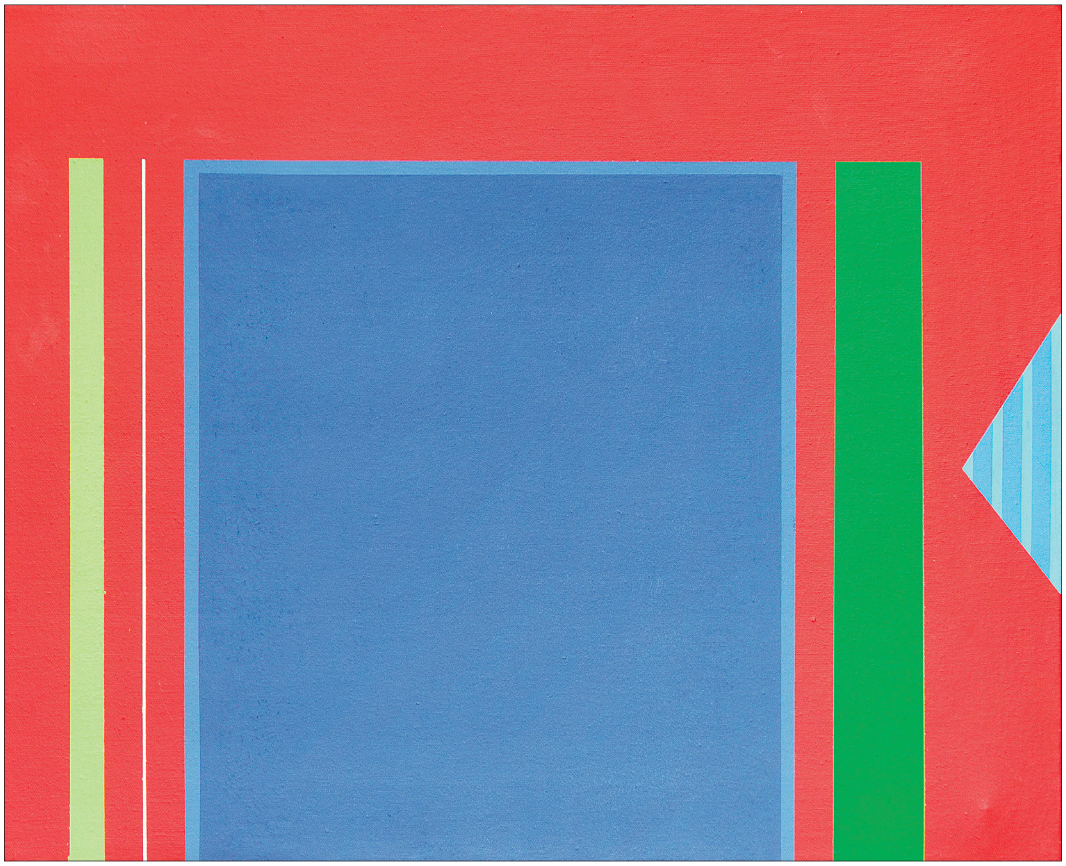
Shogun

1988. Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 69 in.

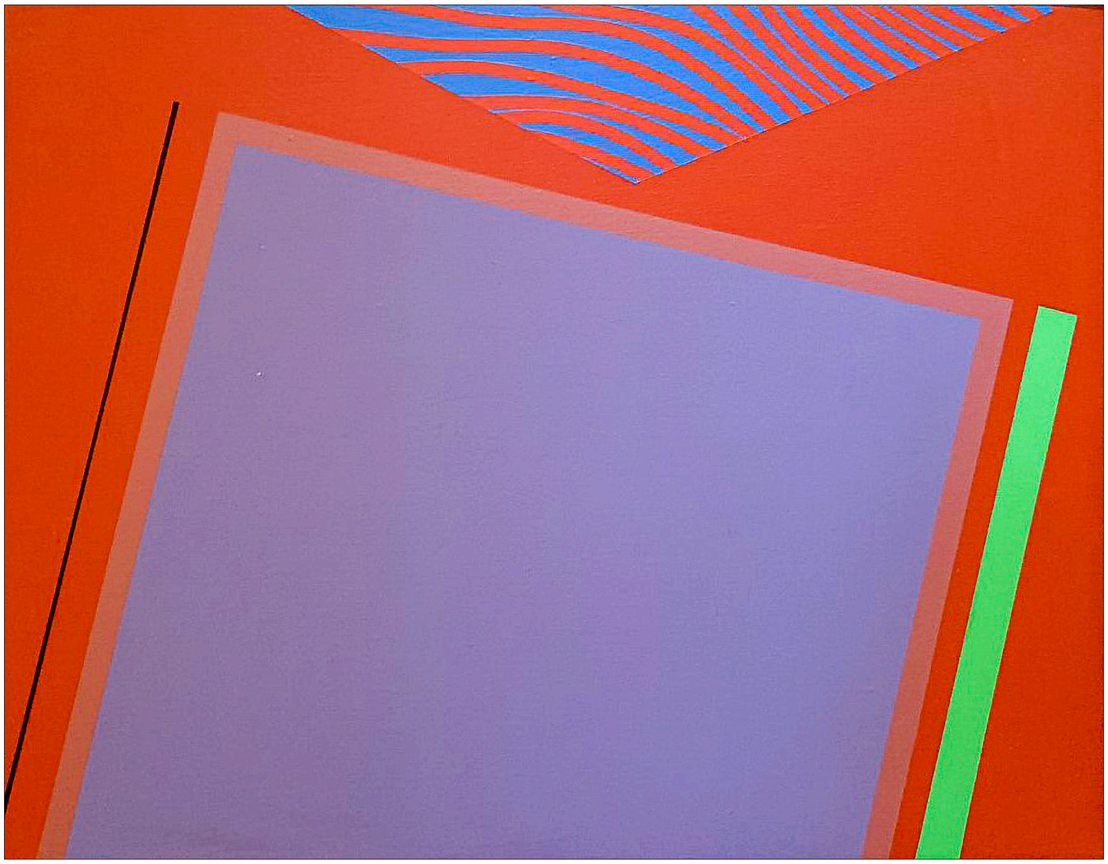


Untitled

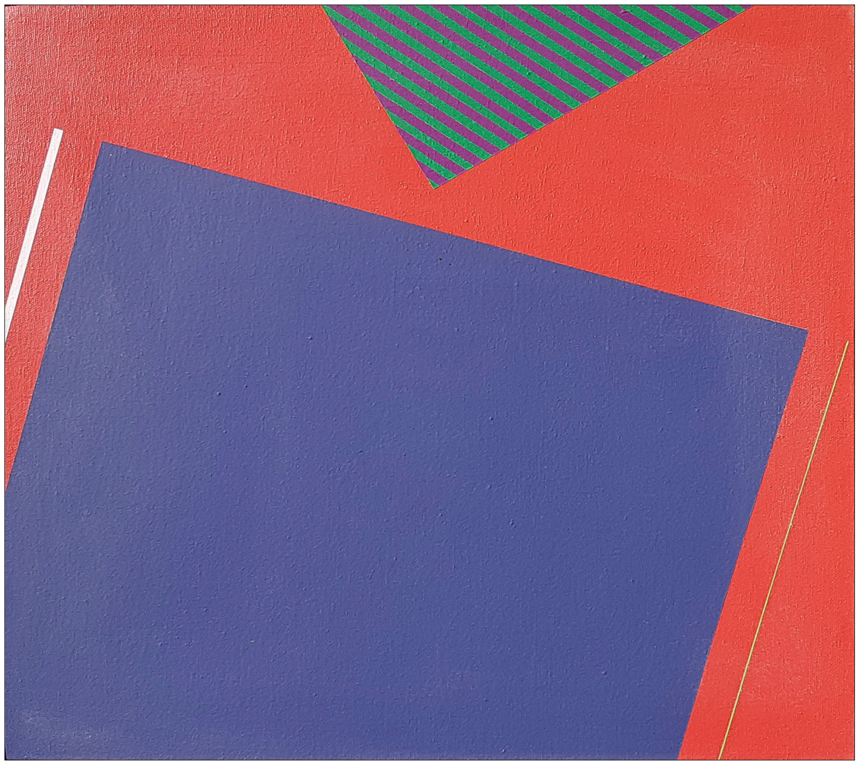
c. 1988. Acrylic on canvas, 50.5 x 57 in.
Collection of Patrick Rock.



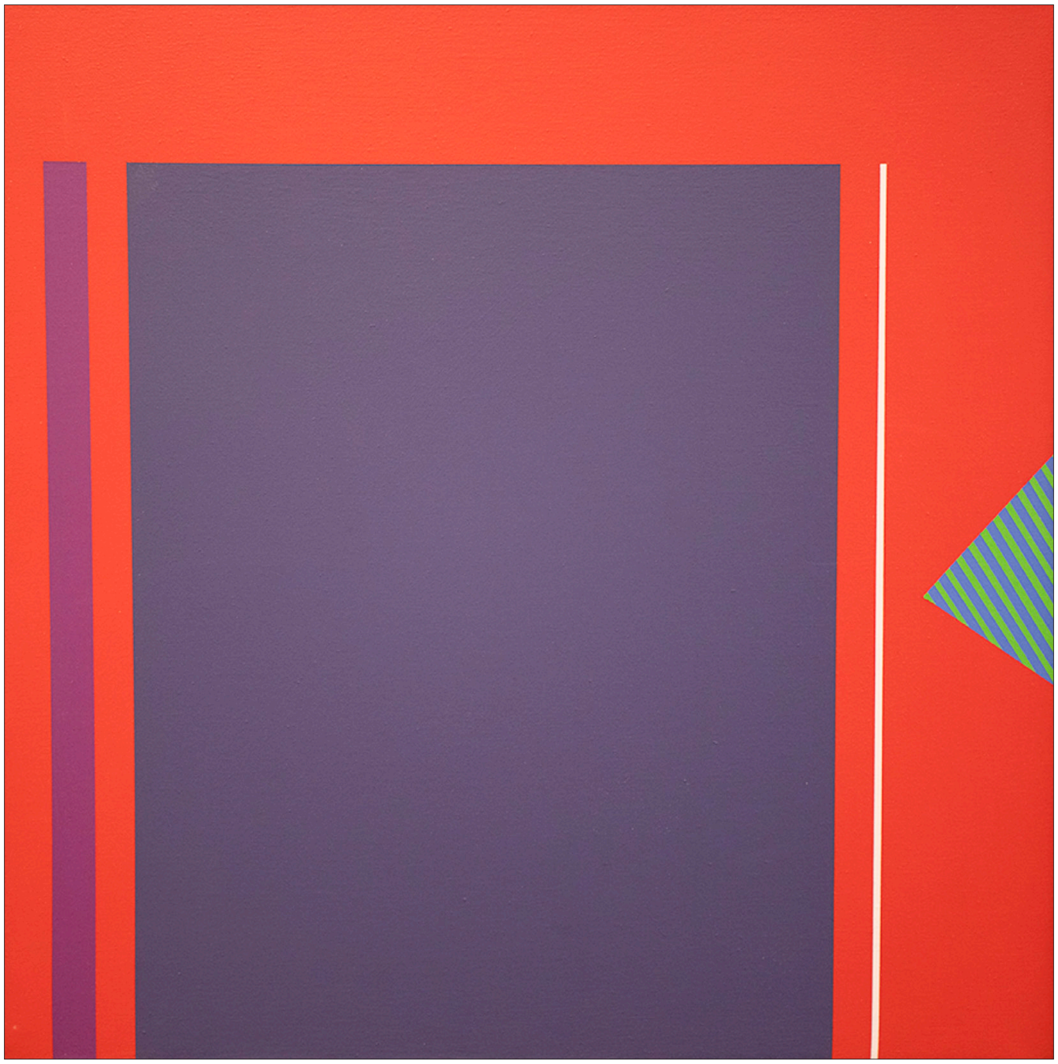
Midwinter, 1989. Acrylic on canvas, 17 x 21 in.
Collection of David and Beverly Freeman.



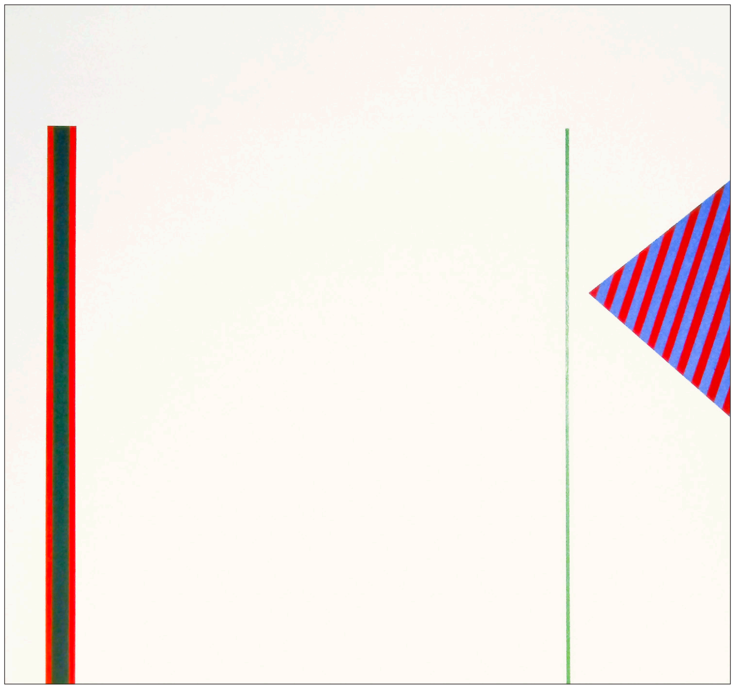
Tilt, probably 1989.
Acrylic on canvas, 17 x 22 in.
Collection of Robert F. Hower.



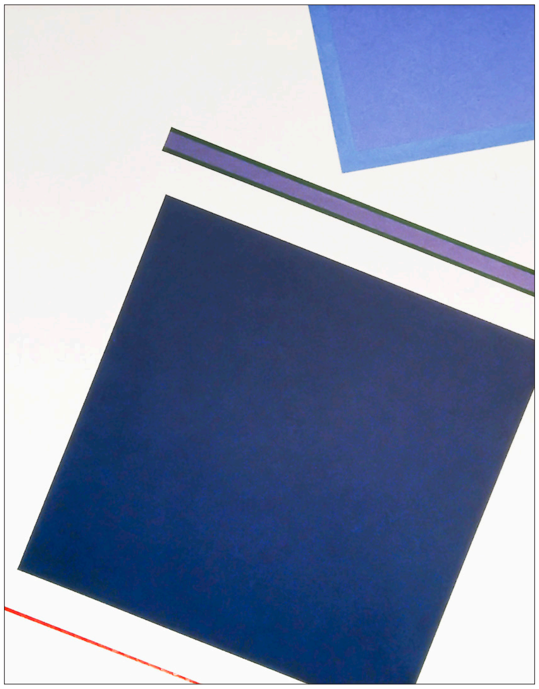
Tilt II, 1989. Acrylic on canvas, 15 x 17 in.
Collection of Kathlene D'Agosta Wisler.



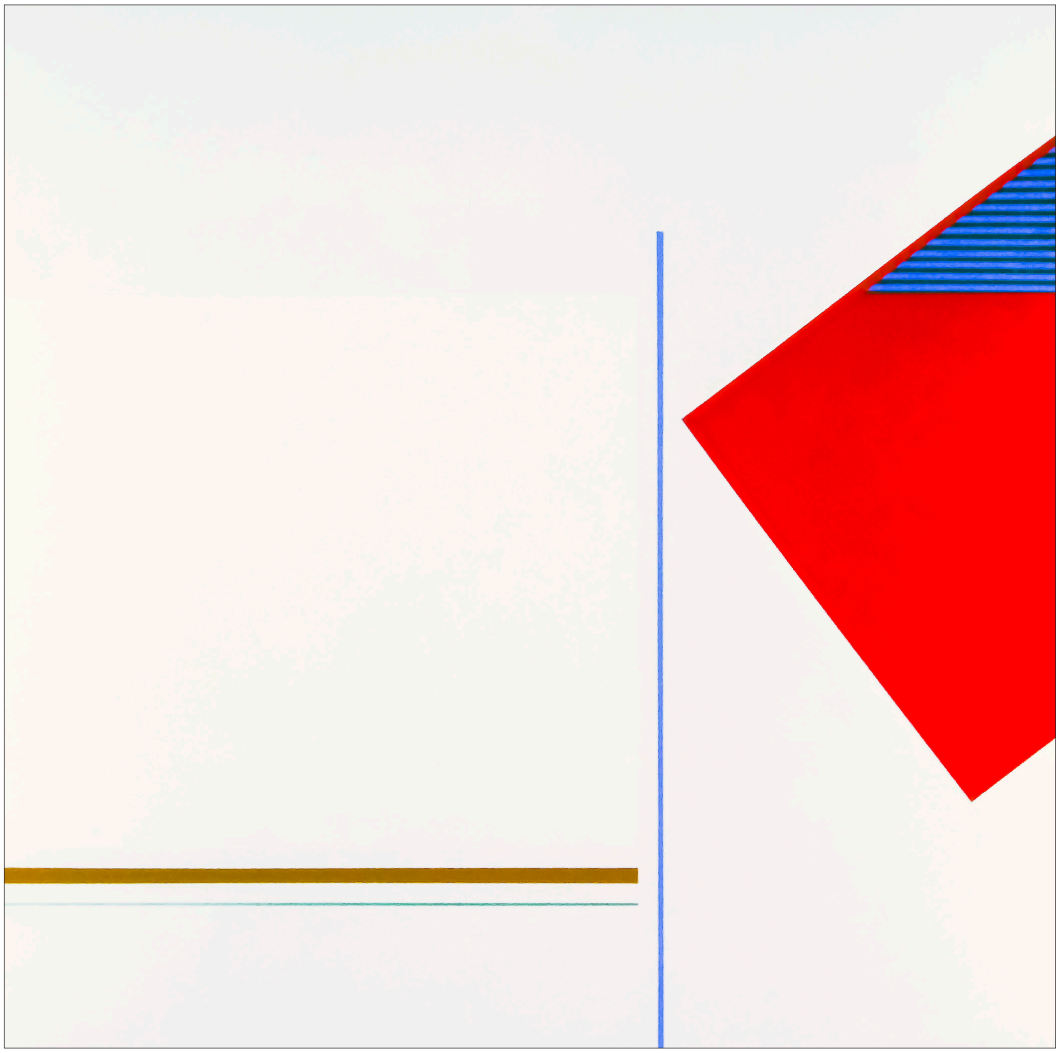
Thick and Thin, 1989.
Acrylic on canvas, 21 x 21 in.



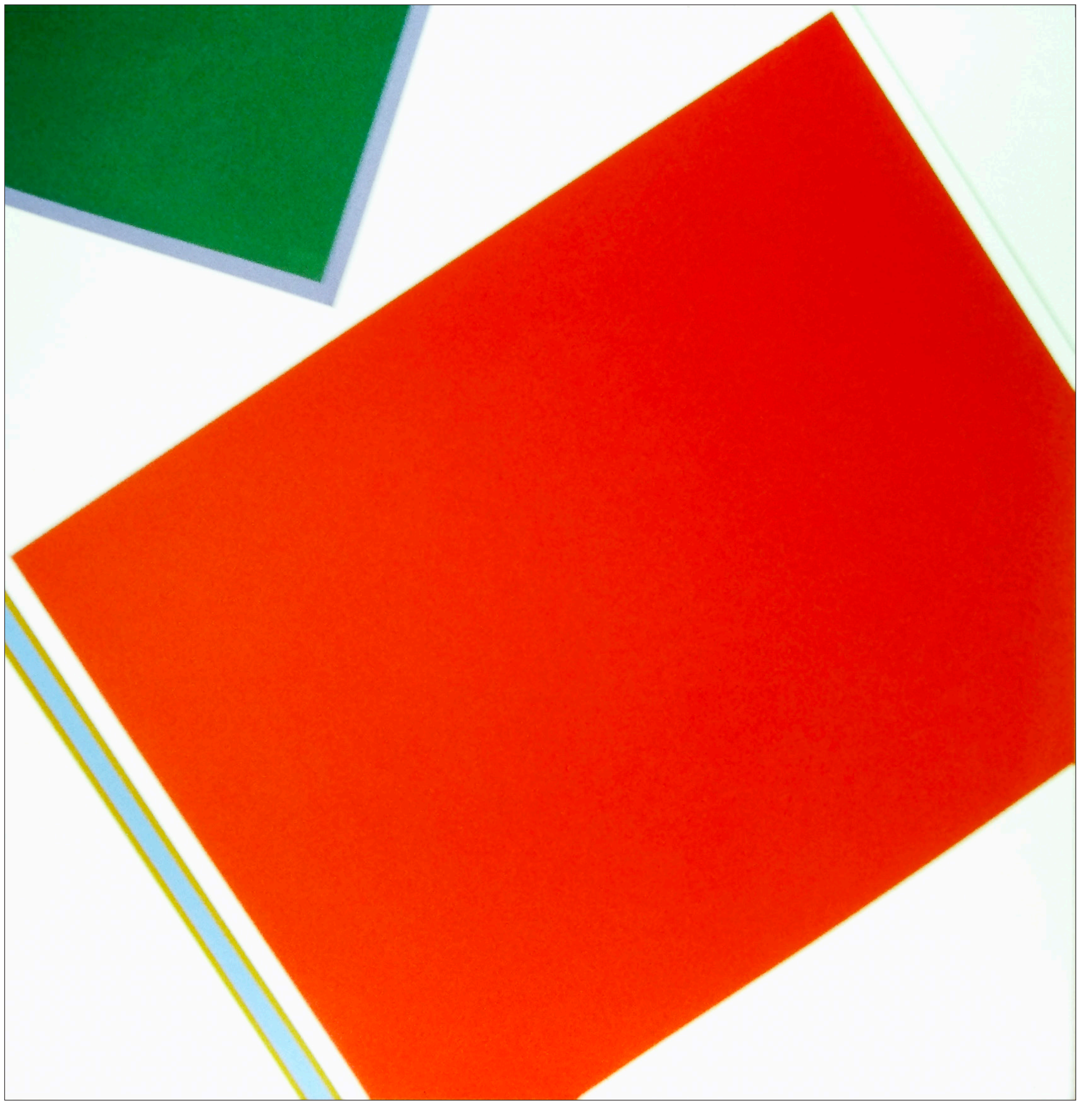
Vic-Pas, 1989. Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 30 in.



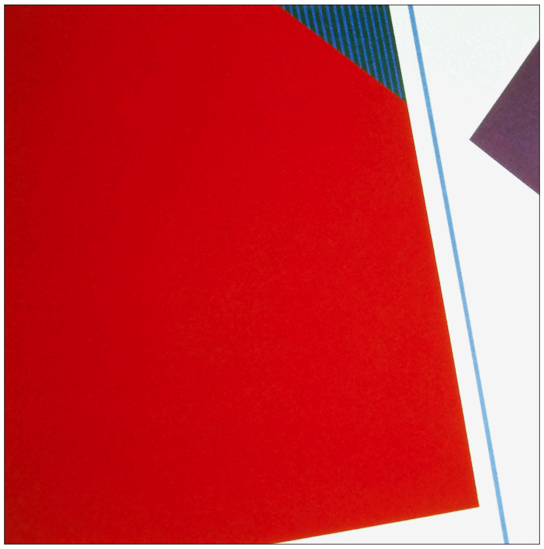
Tilt III, 1989. Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 22 in.
Collection of Dick and Judy Weill.



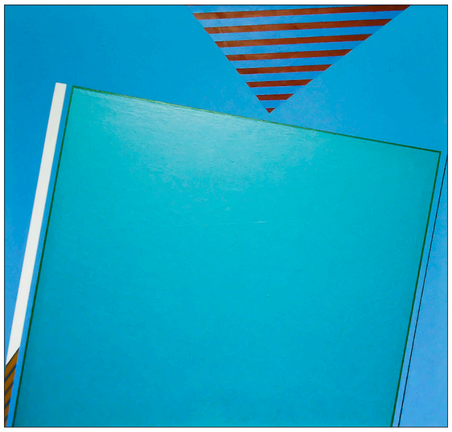
Two Whites, 1989.
Acrylic on canvas, 44 x 43 in.



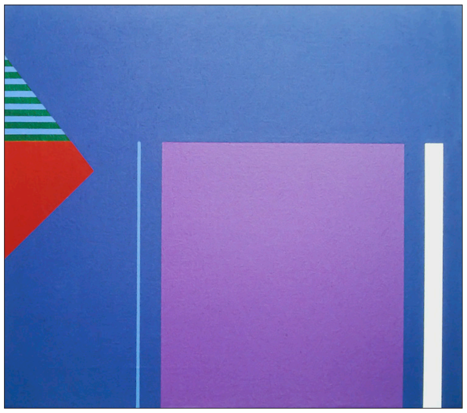
Tilt I, 1989. Acrylic on canvas, 44 x 44 in.



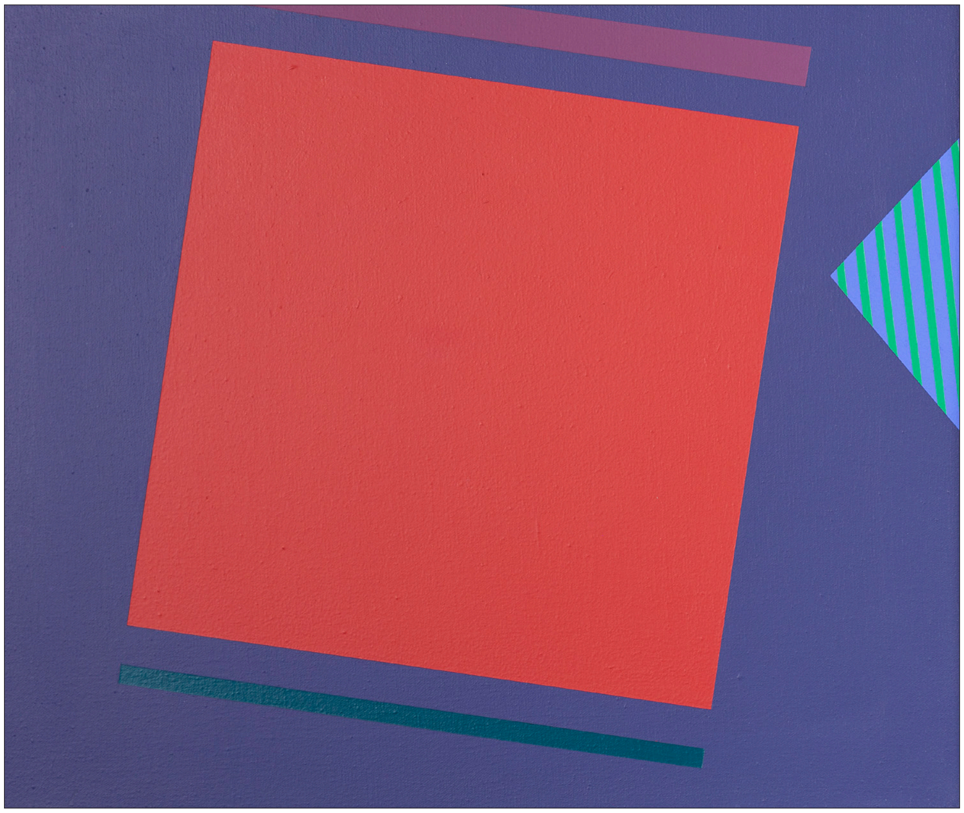
Converge, 1989. Acrylic, 24 x 24 in.
Collection of Dick and Judy Weill.



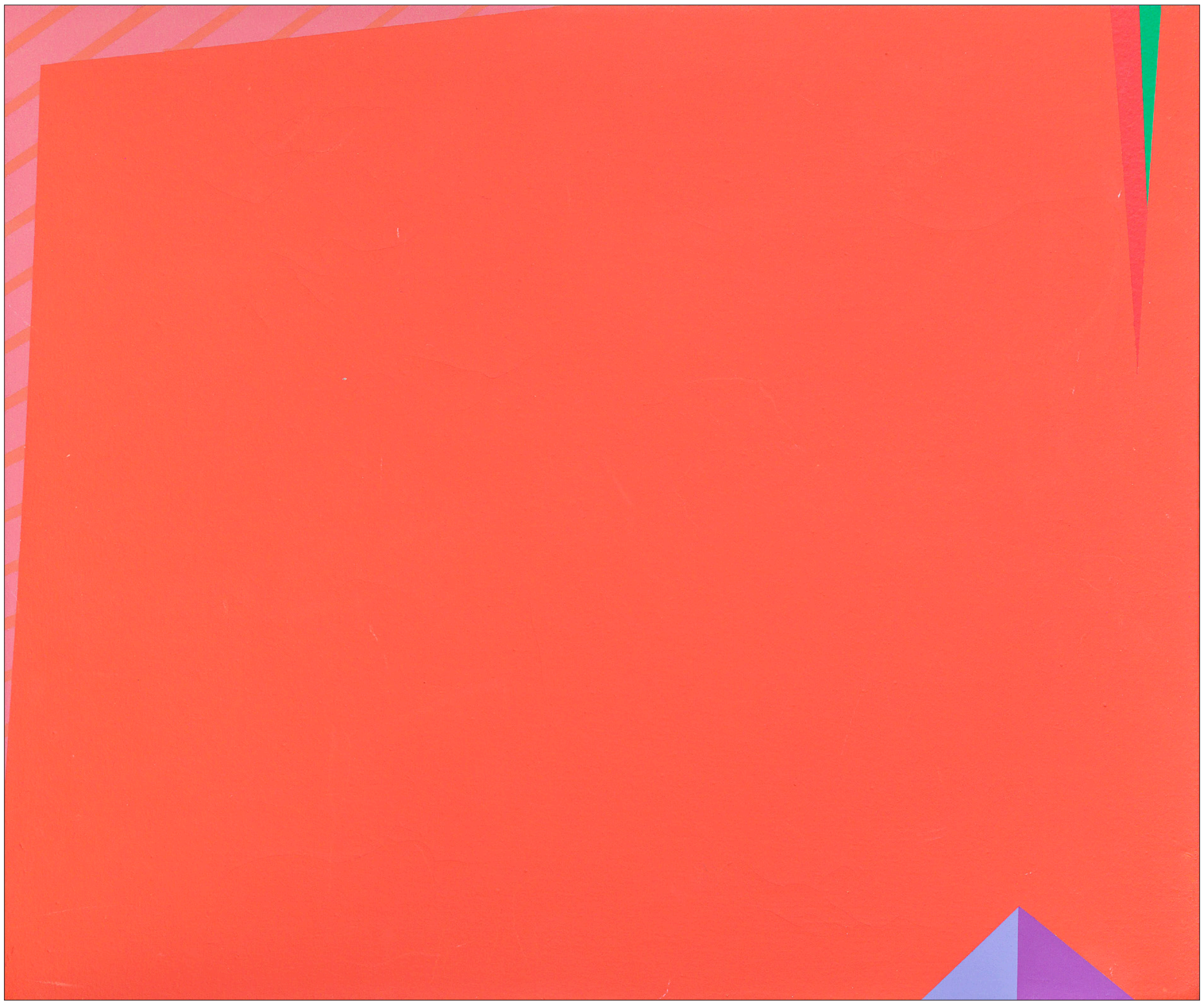
Probably 1989.
Acrylic on canvas.



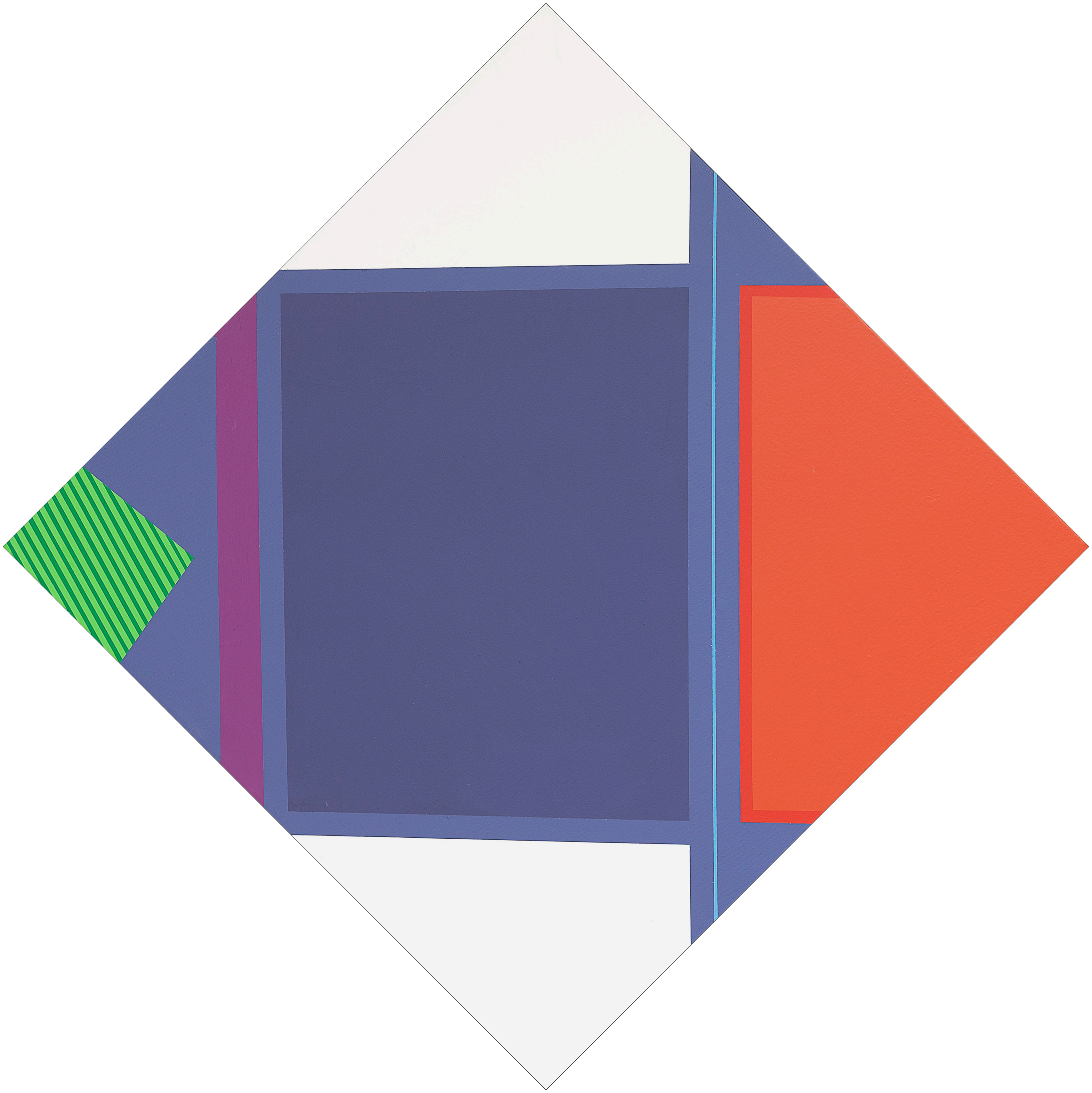
De Stijl II, 1989.
Acrylic on canvas, 17 x 15 in.



De Stijl I, 1989. Acrylic on canvas, 16 x 19 in.
Collection of George and Christine Greene.

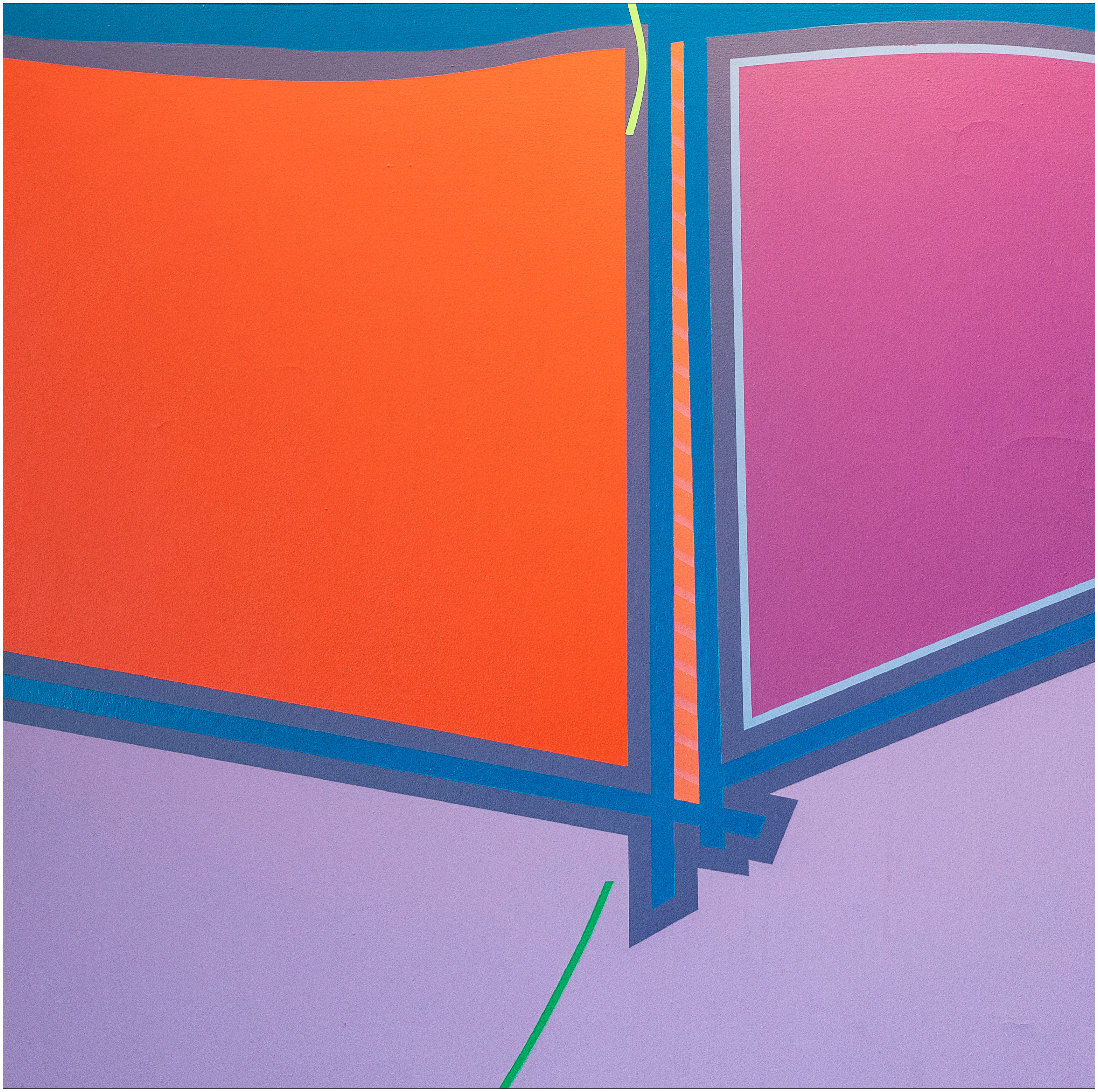


Untitled, 1989.
Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 23.5 in.
Collection of Dana and Scott Porter.



Untitled

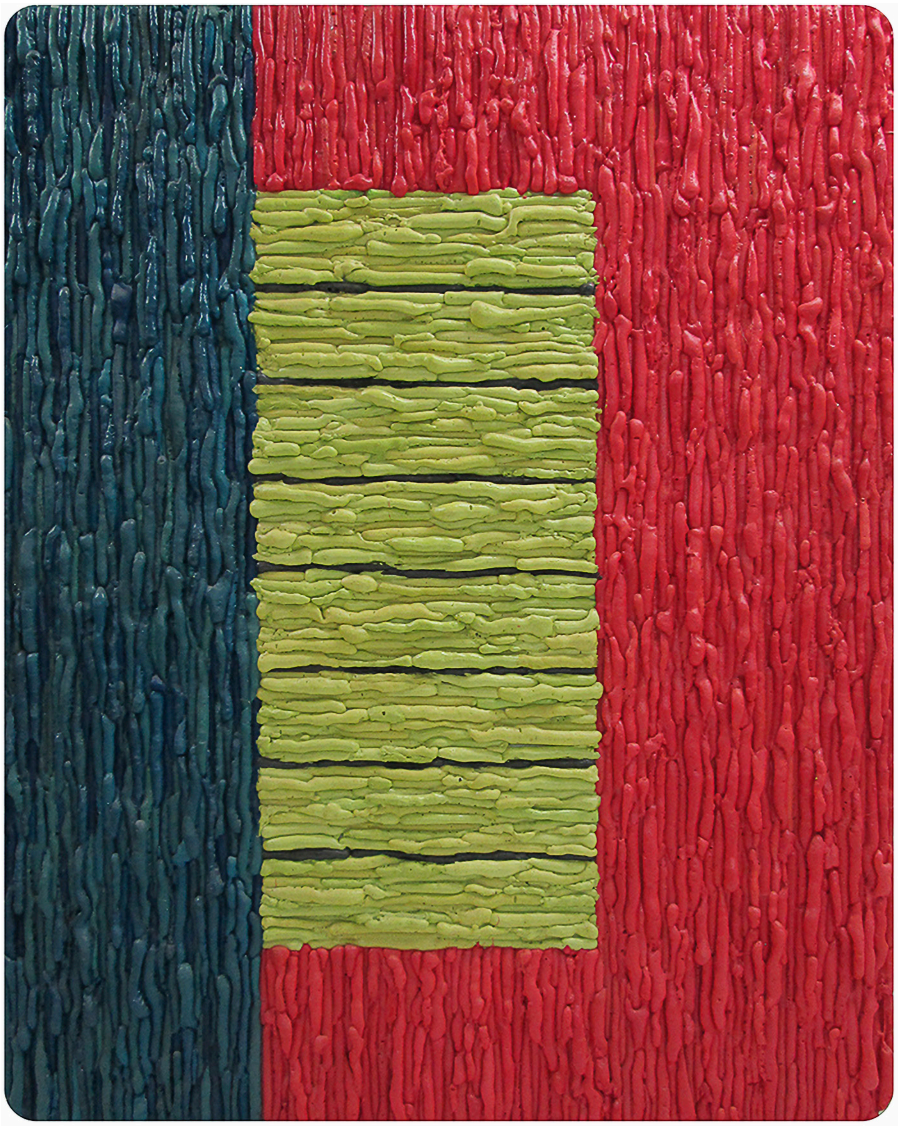
1989. Acrylic on canvas. Height is 35.5 in.; sides are 25 x 25 in.
Collection of Dana and Scott Porter.



Three Parts

1989. Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.

Memories from Colin C. Smith



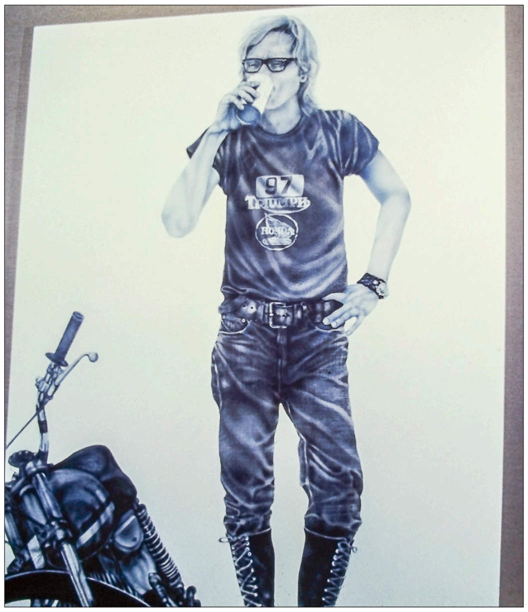
Colin C. Smith. *Static Liquidity*, 2014. 61 x 48 in. Photo by Alec Paul.

Colin C. Smith began his undergraduate years in the mid-1980s at Creighton, where he studied under his first mentor, the sculptor Lee Lubbers. Colin then transferred to UNO, a process that required him to present his art portfolio to a panel of professors. At the time, Colin's art dealt in political themes, a fact that led one of the professors, Sidney (Buzz) Buchanan—maker of apolitical formalist sculpture—to bluntly declare he did not want to work with Colin. Another professor raised his hand and said, "I'll take him." That's how Colin found his second mentor: Peter Hill.

Part of my dad's mentoring took the form of not letting Colin paint during regular class hours. Instead, Colin and my dad would talk in his office about art and art history. Colin graduated from UNO in 1988 and then married; he received *System IV* (page 361) as a wedding gift from my father. After UNO, he went to Drake University, where he met his third mentor (the printmaker Richard Black) and earned his MFA.

As of 2022, Colin teaches drawing at UNO and is represented by Modern Arts Midtown. His works can be found at www.ccsmithstudio.com.

Student Work, Late 1980s


David MacCullum

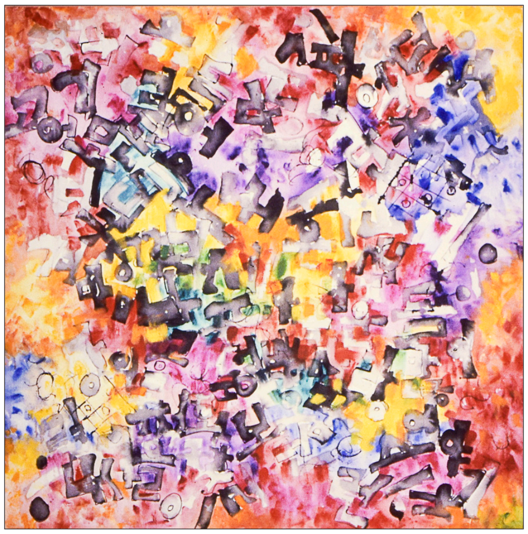
Margaret Hoh

Sandy Kelly

Emily Melingagio

Sook-Young Kim, 1987

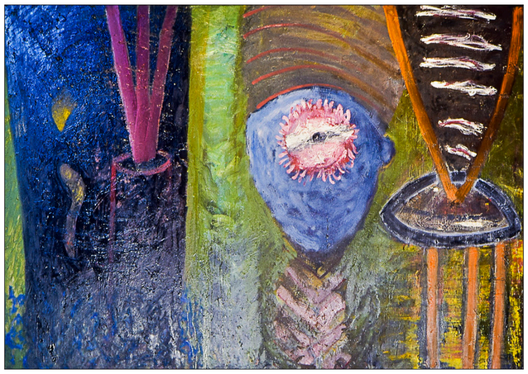
Sook-Young Kim, 1987

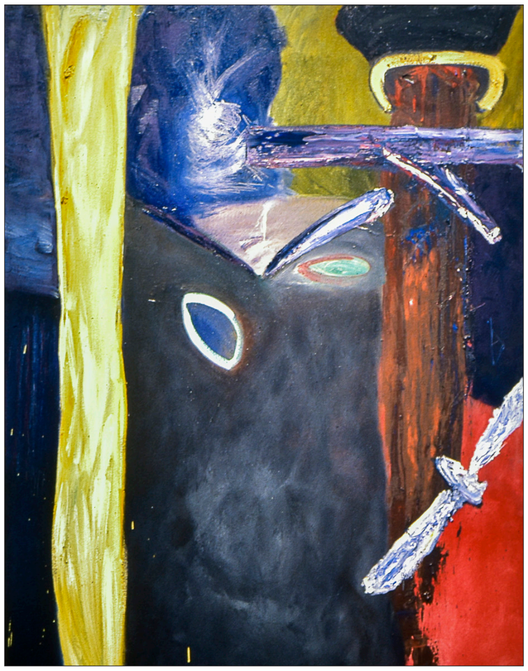

Sook-Young Kim, 1987

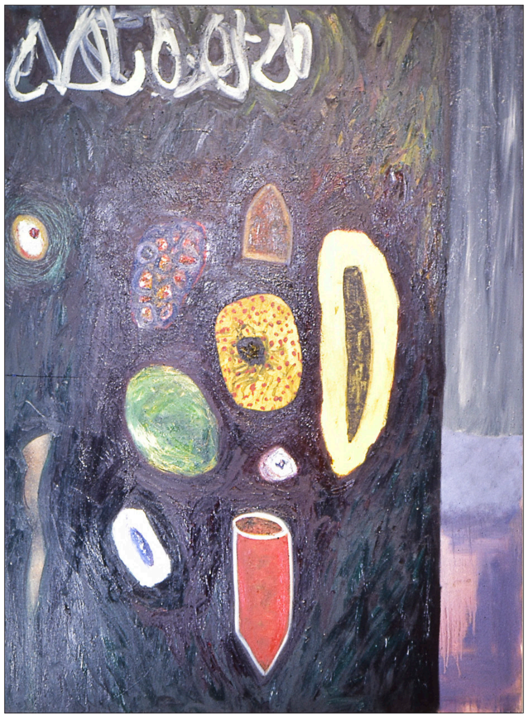
Colin C. Smith, 1988

Colin C. Smith, 1988

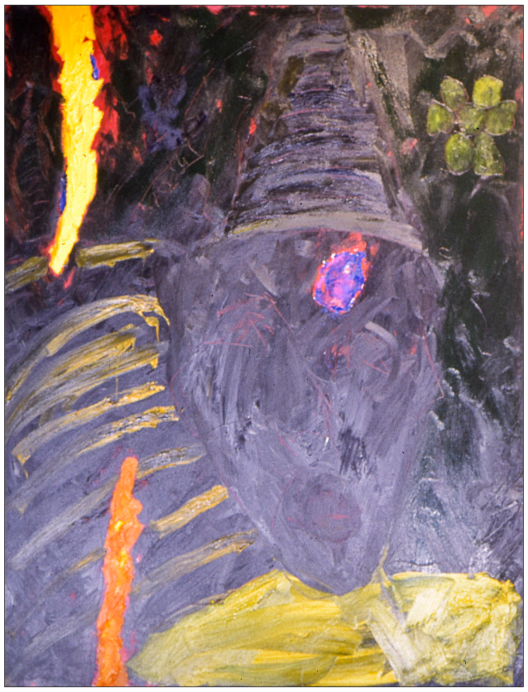
Colin C. Smith, 1988


Colin C. Smith, 1988

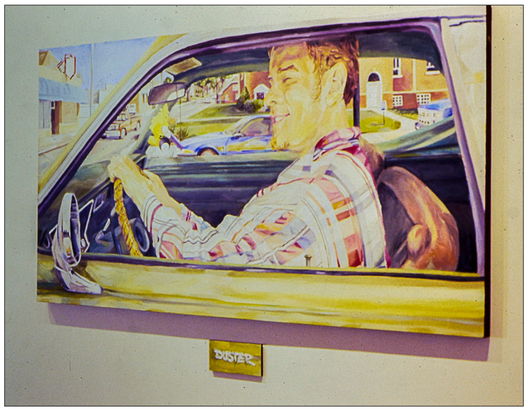

Colin C. Smith, 1988



Colin C. Smith, 1988

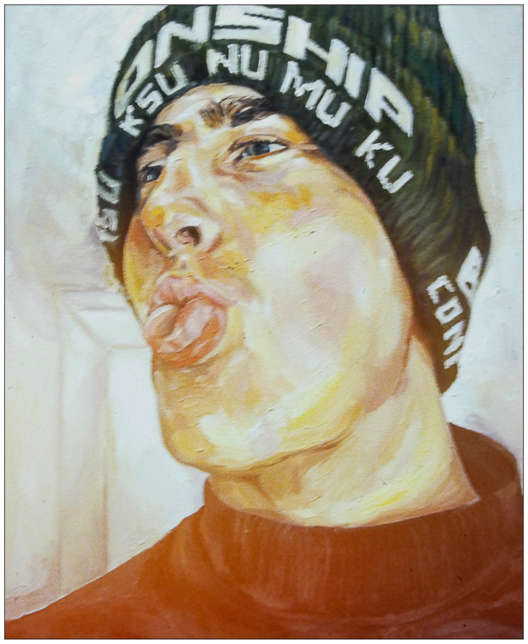


Colin C. Smith, 1988



Joel Holm, 1988

Joel Holm, 1988



Joel Holm, 1988

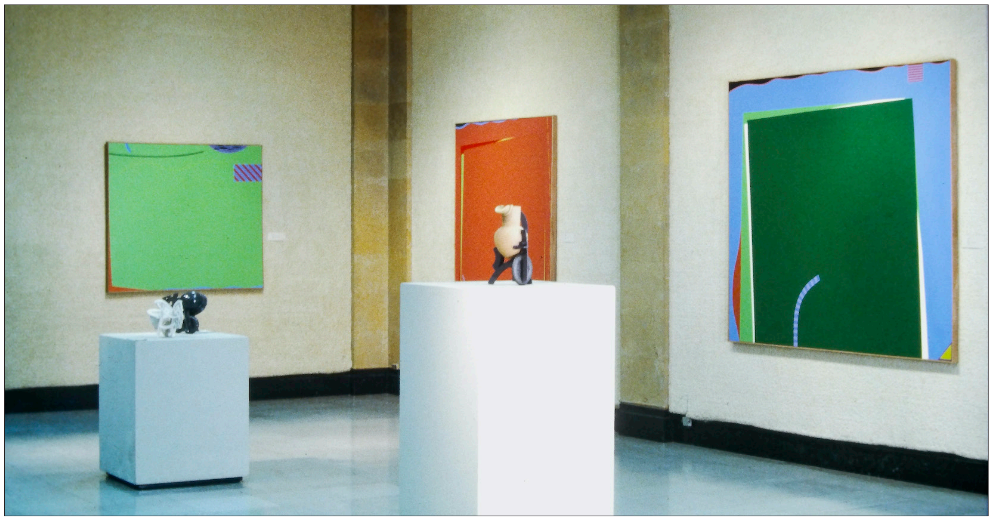
K. Kushner, 1989

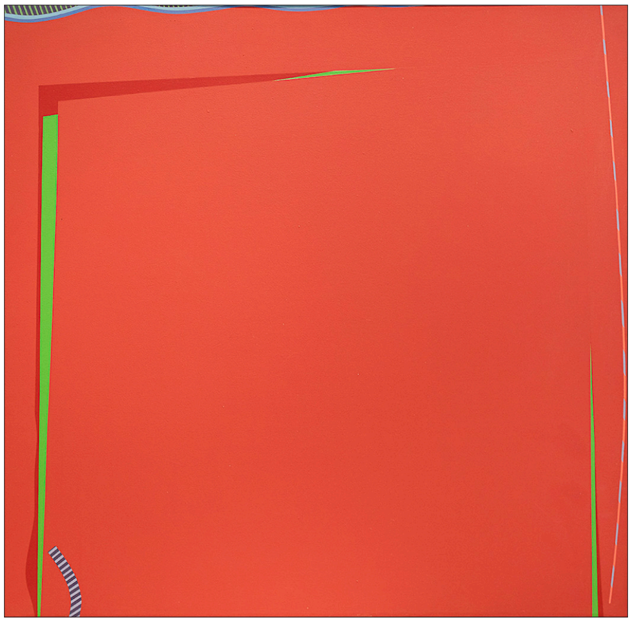
Amy Wolf, 1989

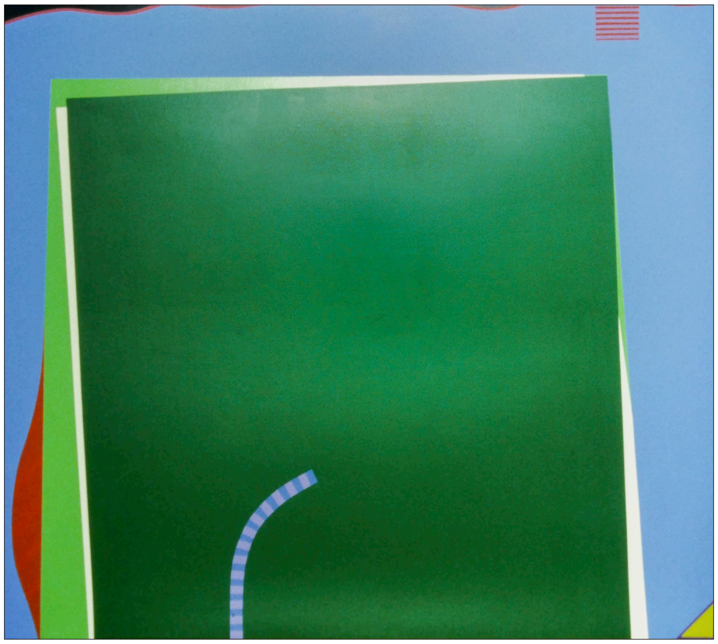
Amy Wolf, 1989

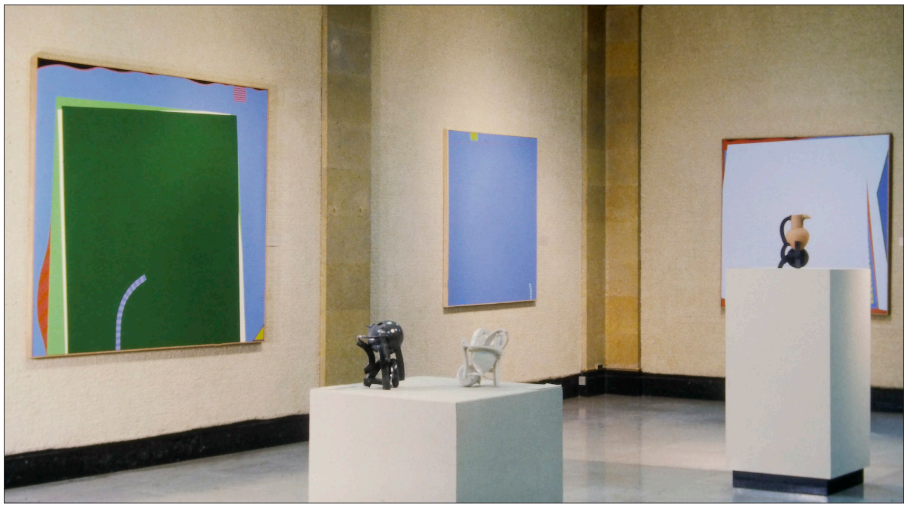
Jeff Spencer

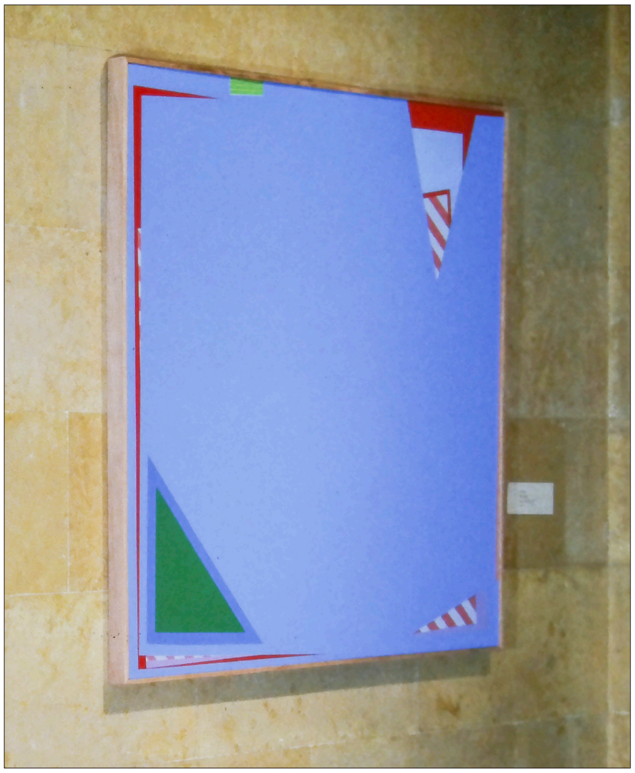
Joslyn Museum of Art
March 10 to April 19, 1987


Left to right: *Shang*, *Cathay II*, *Escort*

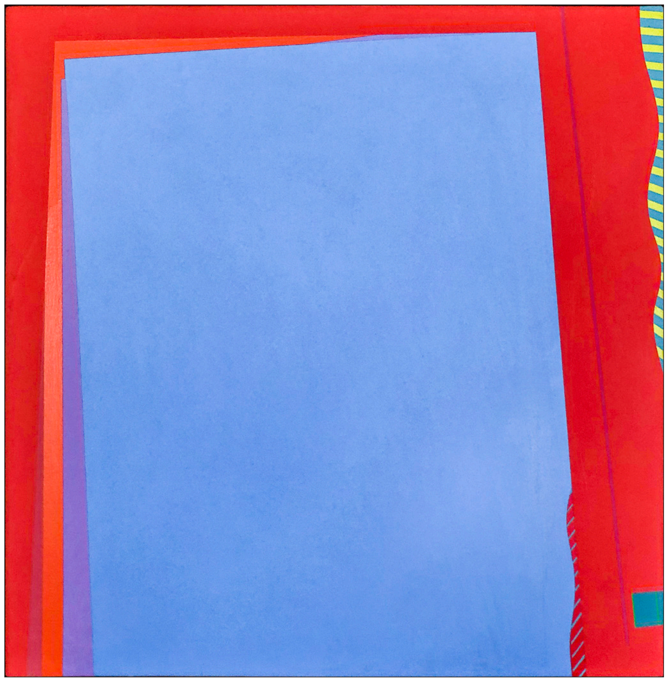

Cathay II, 1987. Acrylic on canvas, 50 x 51 in.


Escort, 1987. Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 68 in.


Left to right: *Escort*, *Children's Box*, *Uns Trägt Kein Volk*

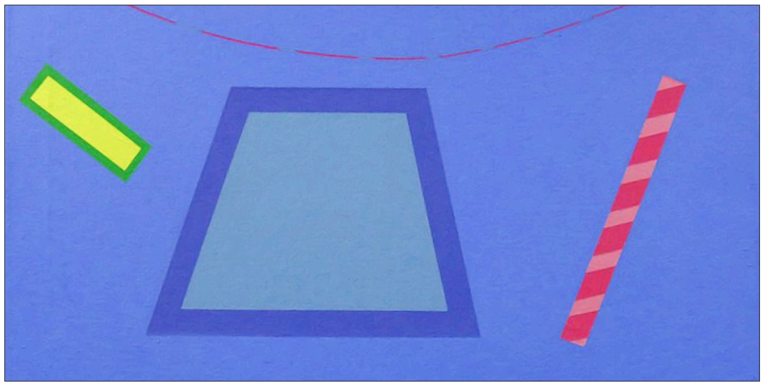


Green Corner



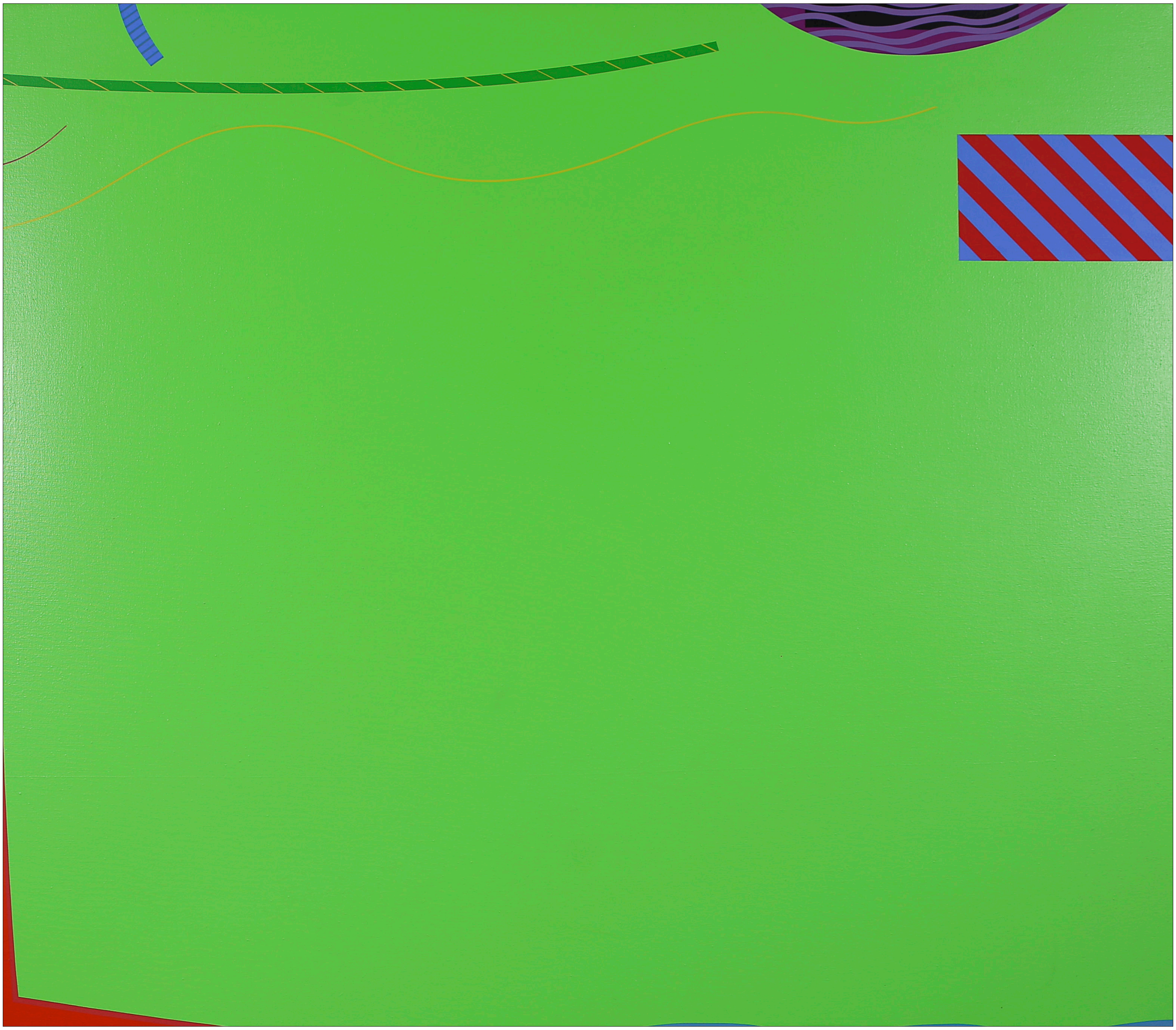
System I, 1986. Acrylic on canvas, 23.5 x 22 in.
Collection of Deborah Vacek; see also page 361.

Left to right: *Edge*, *Blue Edge*, *System I*



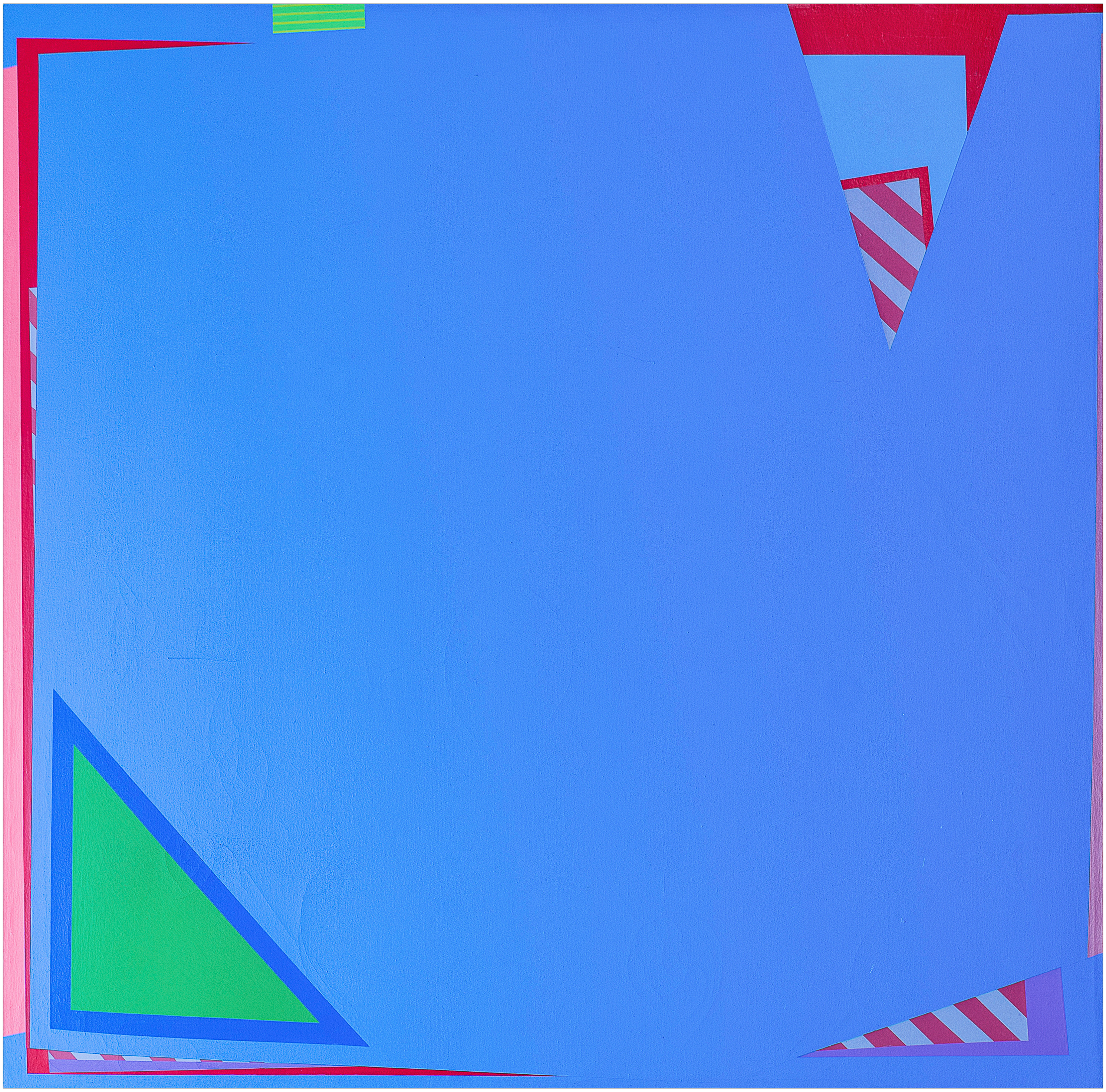
Four Pieces, 1986. Acrylic on canvas, 15 x 24 in.
Collection of the Museum of Nebraska Art.

Left to right: unknown, unknown, *Four Pieces*



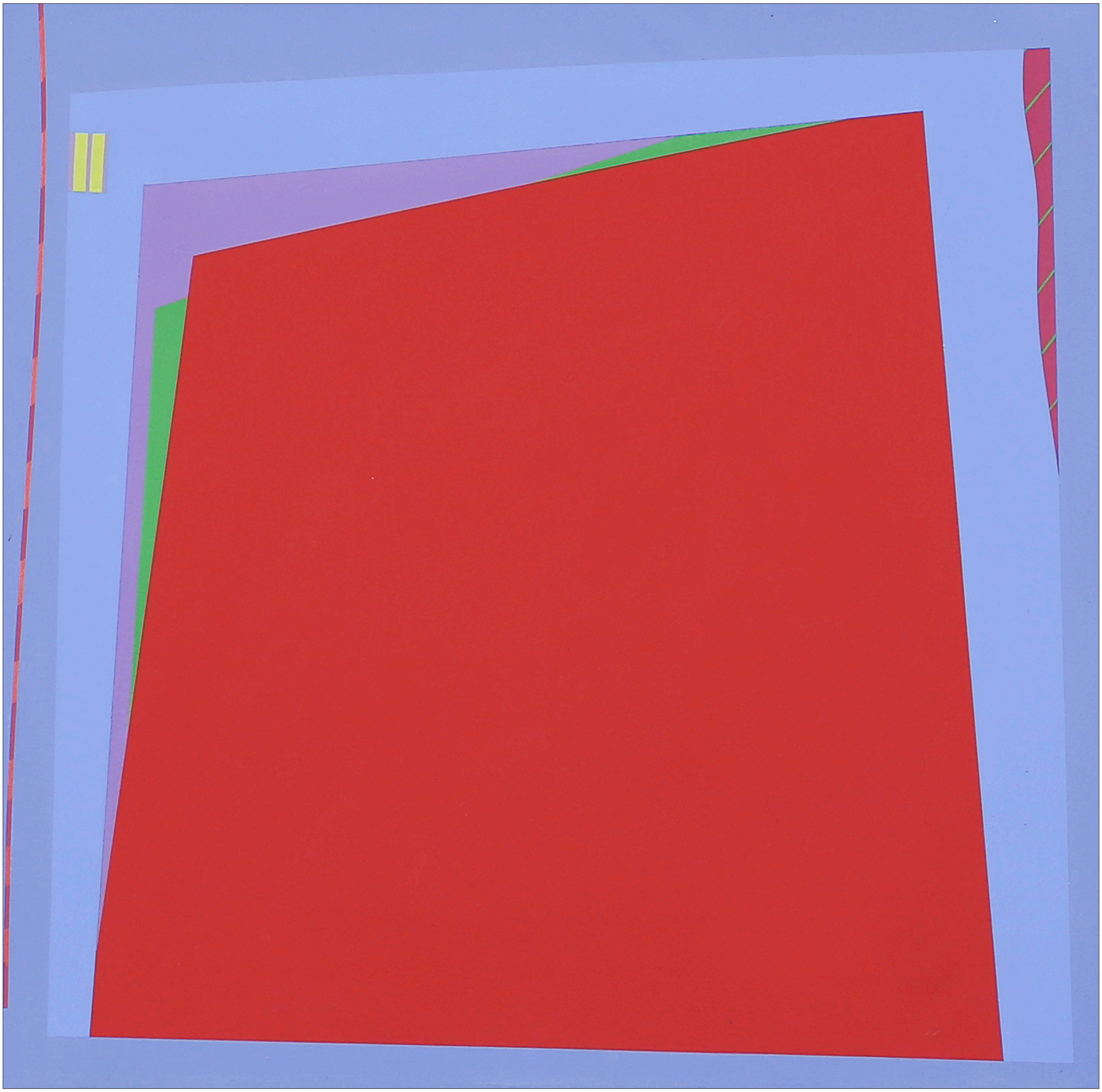
Shang

1987. Acrylic on canvas, 43 x 49 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



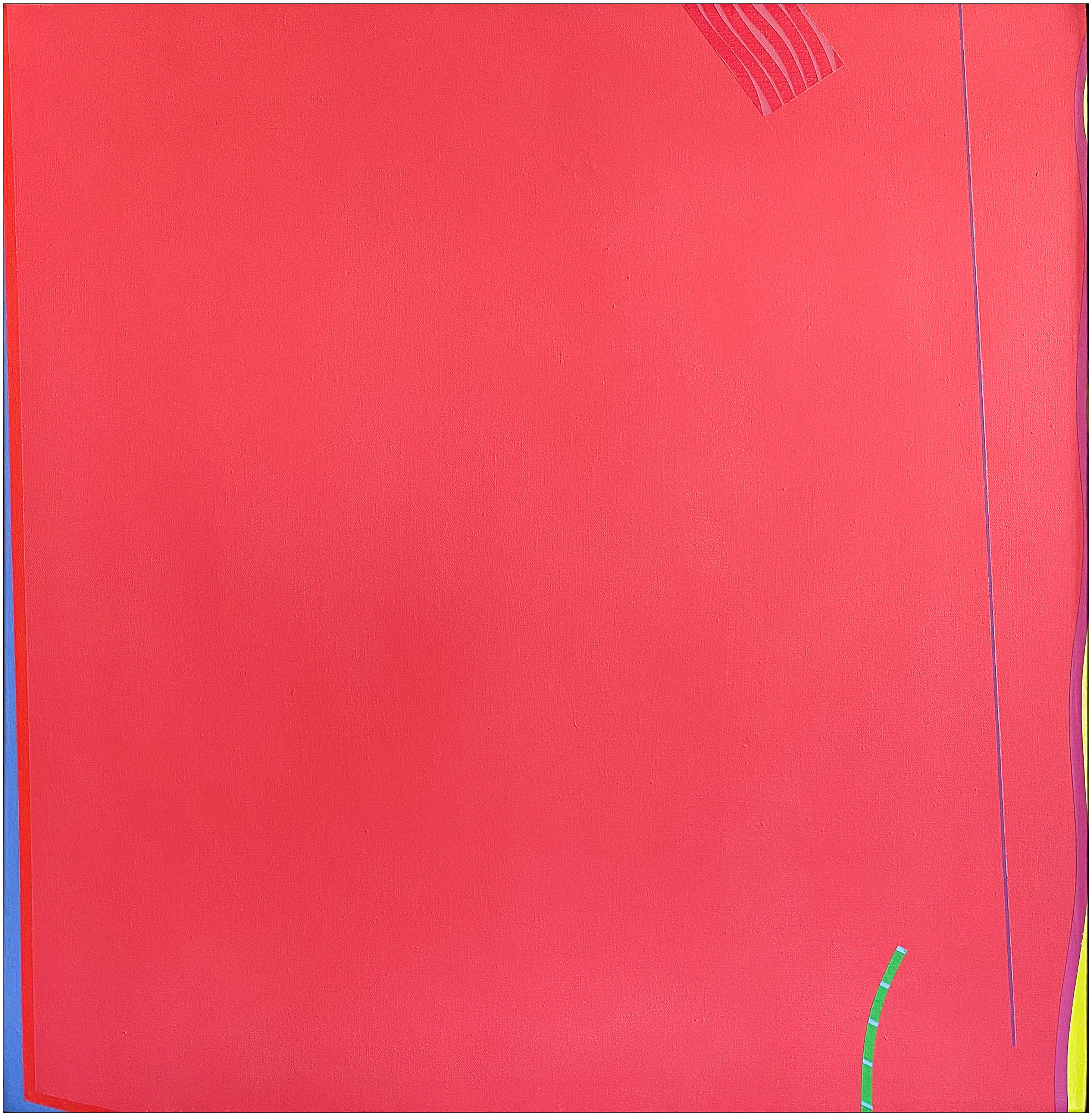
Green Corner

1987. Acrylic on canvas, 41 x 41.5 in.
Collection of Jonathan and Maureen Hill.



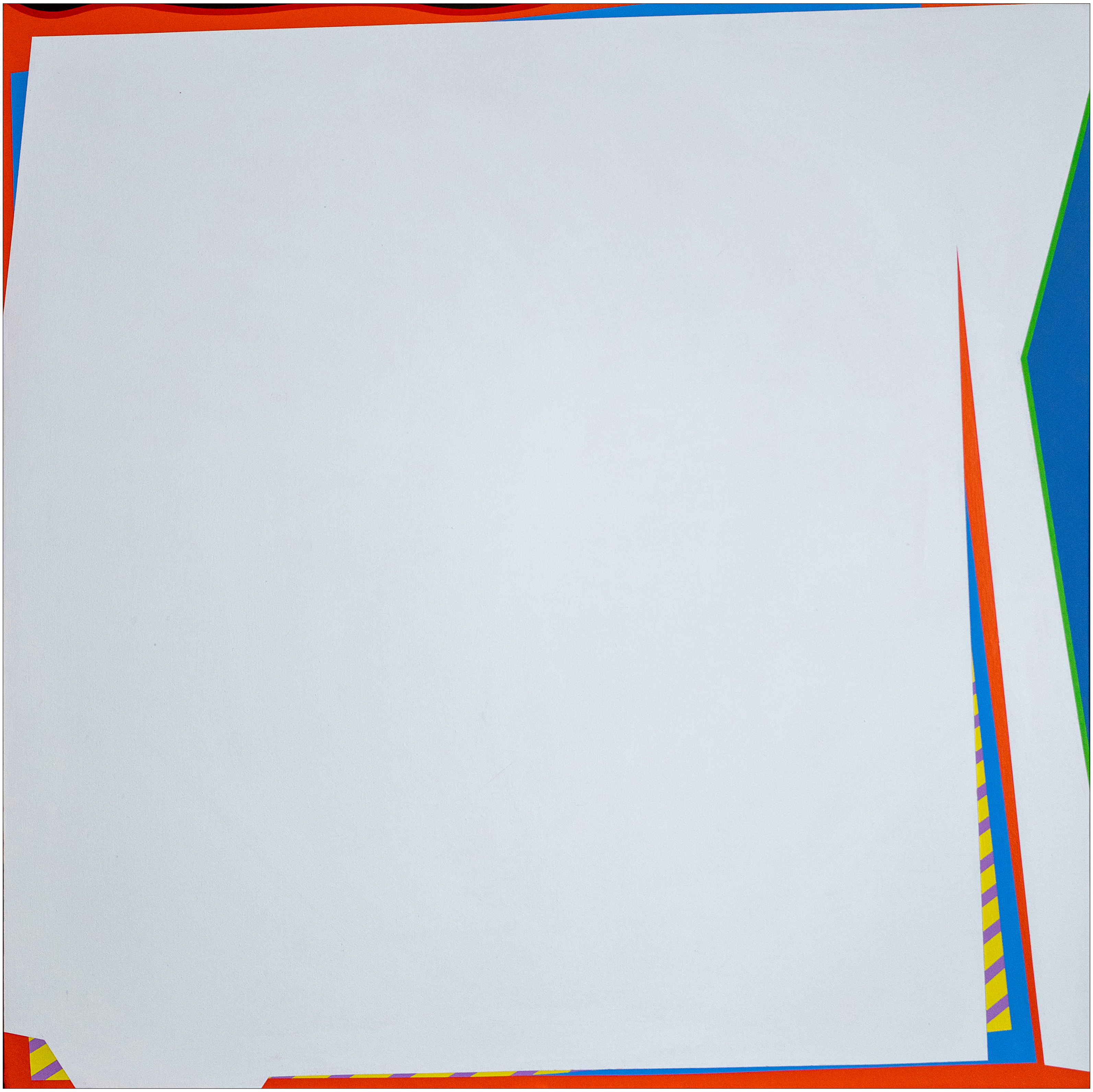
Edge

1984. Acrylic on canvas, 25 x 25 in.
Collection of Stephen and Leslie Hill.



Blue Edge

1986. Acrylic on canvas, 25.25 x 24.5 in.
Collection of Patrick Rock.

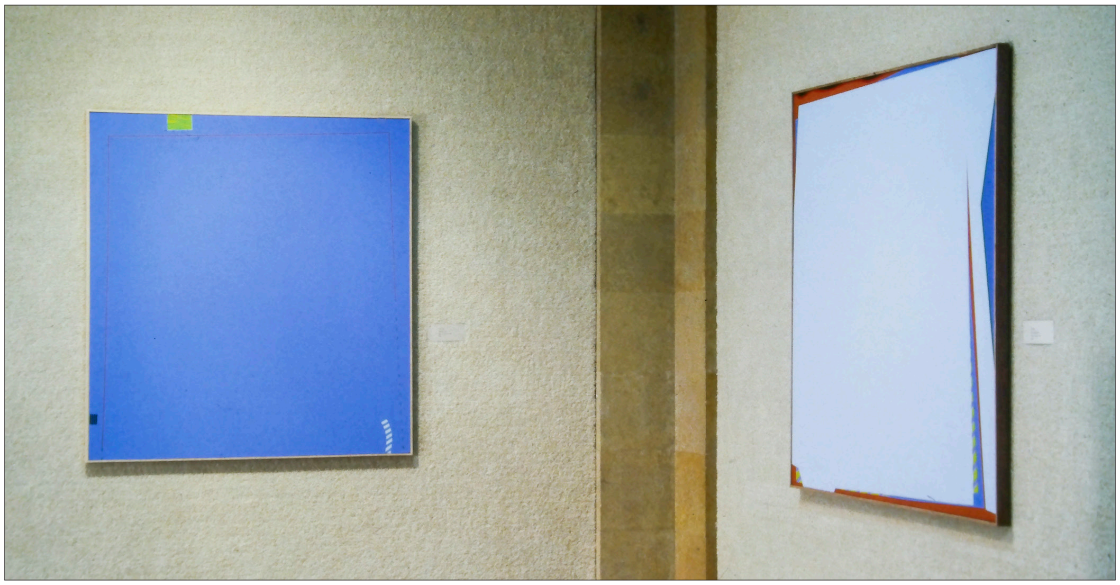


Uns Trägt Kein Volk (No People Carry Us)

1987. Acrylic on canvas, 52 x 53 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.

Omaha World-Herald, April 5, 1987

Reviewer's Question: What Is Fine Art?



1987 Joslyn Exhibition: *Children's Box* (left), *Uns Trägt Kein Volk* (right)

The paintings by Peter Hill on exhibition in Joslyn Art Museum's Rental and Sales Gallery, 22nd and Dodge Streets, force the viewer to confront one of the most difficult delineations in art: the difference between serious fine art and decorative art.

Hill's paintings are a style known as hard-edged abstraction. In that technique, the artist masks off portions of the canvas while he works on other areas. This results in precise, exact lines of intersection between different sections of color.

These works generally contain a large, bold color space in the center. Hill then has broken up the main plane with various motifs around the sides.

"Children's Box," 1987, typifies the works in the series. Most of the canvas is covered in a sky blue. A red stripe in the shape of an inverted square U approximately parallels three sides of the work.

At the top is a small, curved motif with yellow and green stripes. Another curved ladder motif in white and greenish blue juts up from the bottom. And a small square on the bottom left finishes out the design with vertical stripes of black and greenish blue.

But does this work succeed? It does in the same way that a good graphic design succeeds. Hill is adept in his use of color and his sense of composition.

But fine art is much more than nice colors and attractive compositions. Fine art must have something to say and must leave a deeper impression on the viewer than a few seconds of enjoyment of color and form.

Wassily Kandinsky took on many of these issues in his landmark 1911 treatise, "Concerning the Spiritual in Art." Kandinsky pioneered abstract art, and his work ranks among the greatest this century has produced.

In the book, Kandinsky tries to explain what makes art great and specifically how abstract art should communicate with the viewer.

An art work "exists and has power to create a spiritual atmosphere; and from this inner standpoint one judges whether it is a good work of art or a bad one. If its 'form' is bad it means that the form is too feeble in meaning to call forth corresponding vibrations of the soul. . . . It is only well-painted if its spiritual value is complete and satisfying."

Kandinsky's observations remain relevant in evaluating contemporary abstract art.

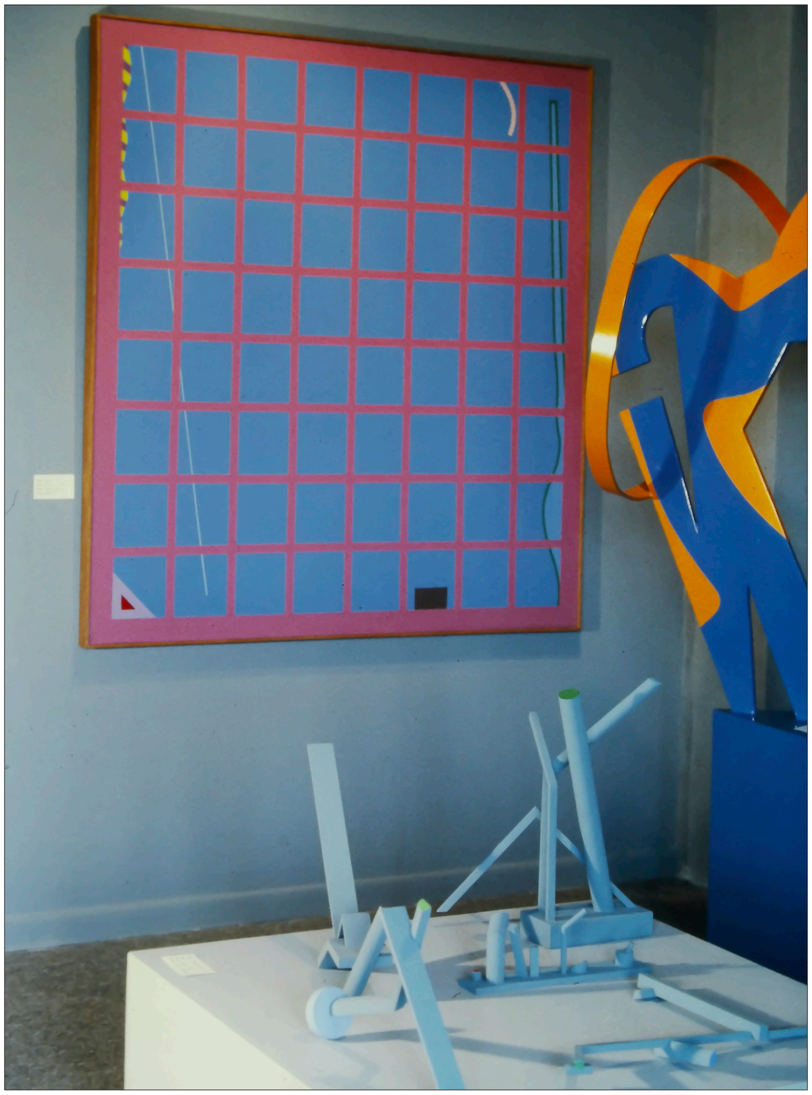
"If we begin at once to break the bonds which bind us to nature, and devote ourselves purely to the combination of pure color and abstract form, we shall produce works which are mere decoration," he wrote. "Beauty of form and color is no sufficient aim by itself, despite the assertions of pure aesthetes or even of naturalists, who are obsessed with the idea of 'beauty.' . . . The nerve vibrations are there, certainly, but they get no further than the nerves, because the corresponding vibrations of the spirit which they call forth are too weak."

Sculptures: 1989

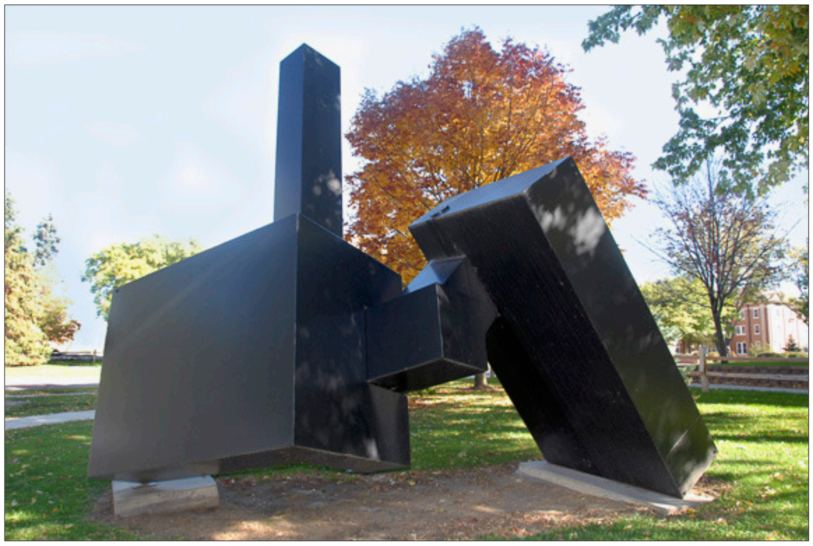
In 1989 my father produced perhaps a dozen small sculptures out of pine wood, wood glue, and acrylic paint. Most are less than a foot long and six inches tall. They are pale blue and accented with various colors. They are rather fragile; here in 2022, the wood glue is decaying. They are coming apart.

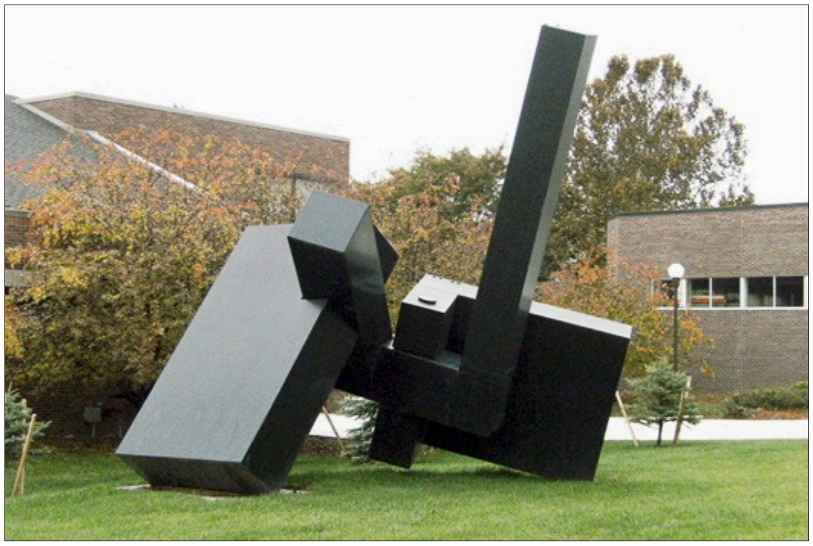
I'm not certain what inspired him to make these little pieces. They resemble the monumental sculptures of his friend and colleague Sidney ("Buzz") Buchanan (below). There's maybe a little David Smith in the mix. But their works are enormous, often heroic in scale; my father's are modest. His paintings of the time suggest he was mulling over de Stijl, Constructivism, and Suprematism—early twentieth-century art movements that, while best known for their painting, also produced sculpture. That said, there's a key difference between those movements and my father's efforts here. The former had grand aspirations to world-historical significance; my father's small explorations understand that they are just that: small and exploratory.

I'm reproducing my father's photographs from 1989, grainy as they are. Reason: When artists photograph their sculptures, they choose angles that they find most pleasing and showcase what they wish to emphasize. I'm assuming my father's photos represent his favored views of these works.

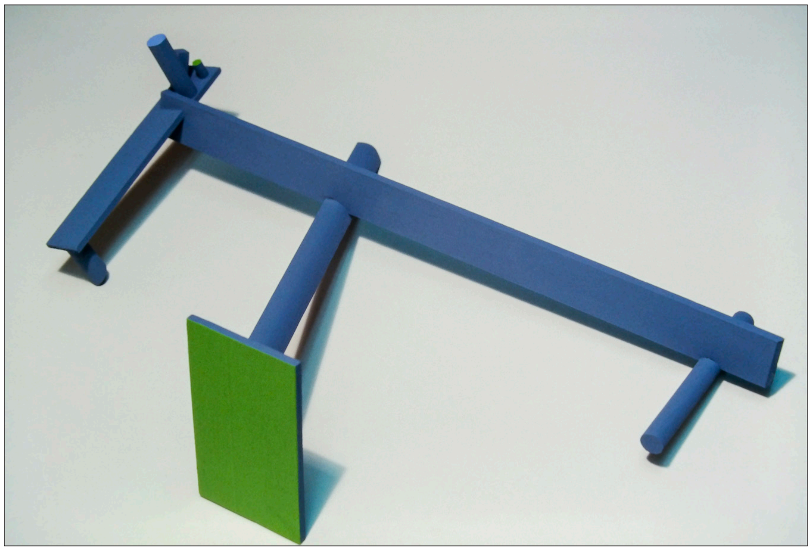


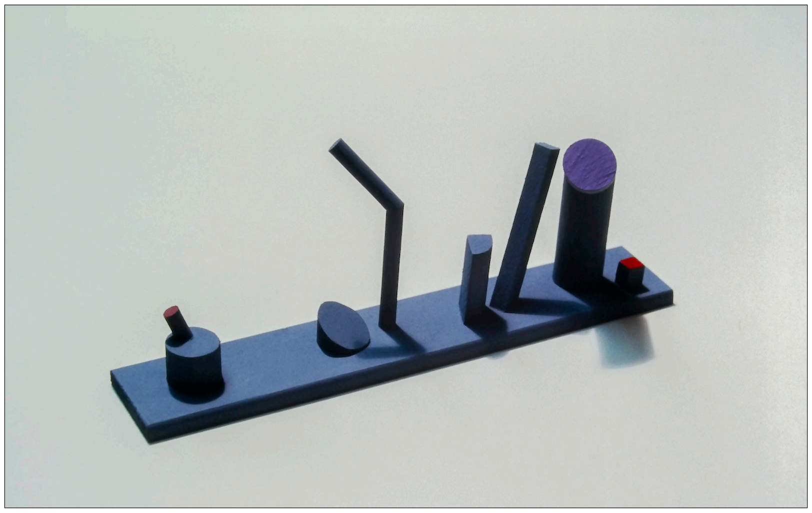
1989. Unknown exhibition. *Ibis* (1983), small sculptures (1989).

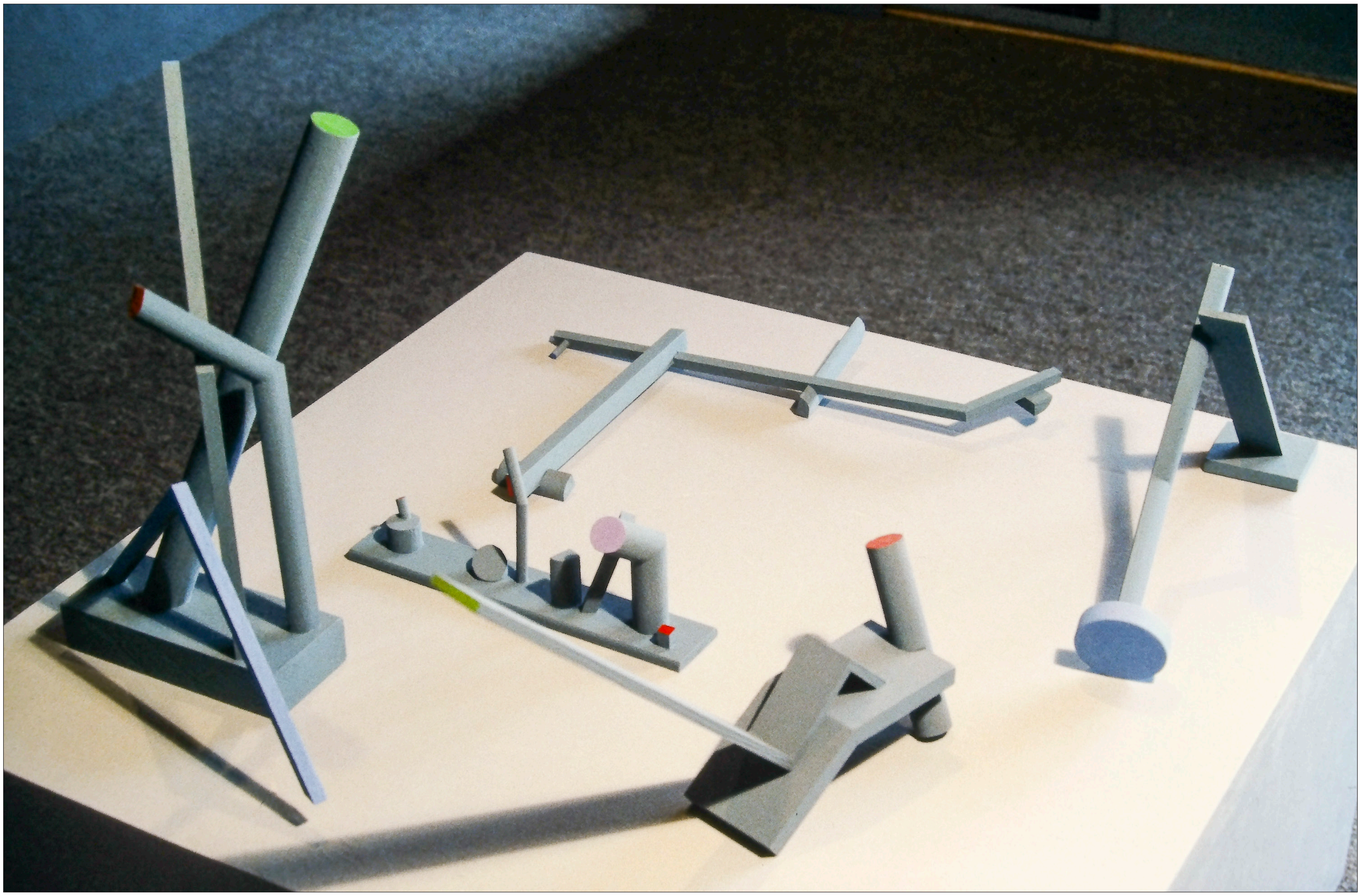




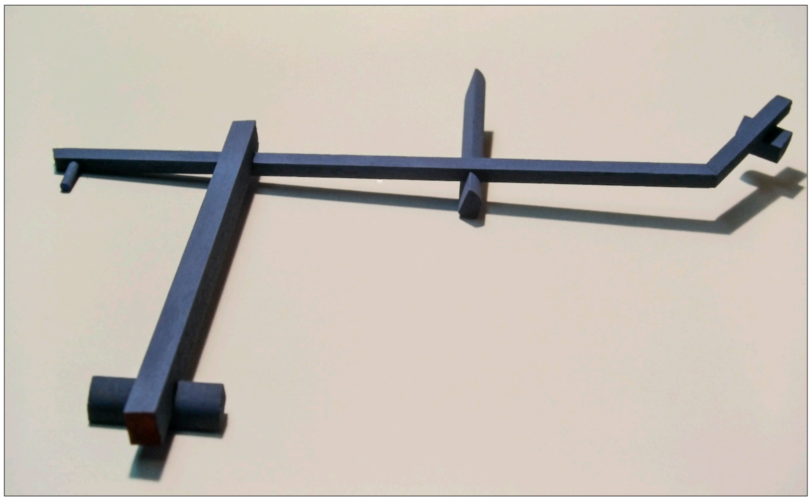
Above and right: *Cybele*. Sidney ("Buzz") Buchanan. Painted steel, 96 x 204 x 180 in. Collection of Wayne State University.

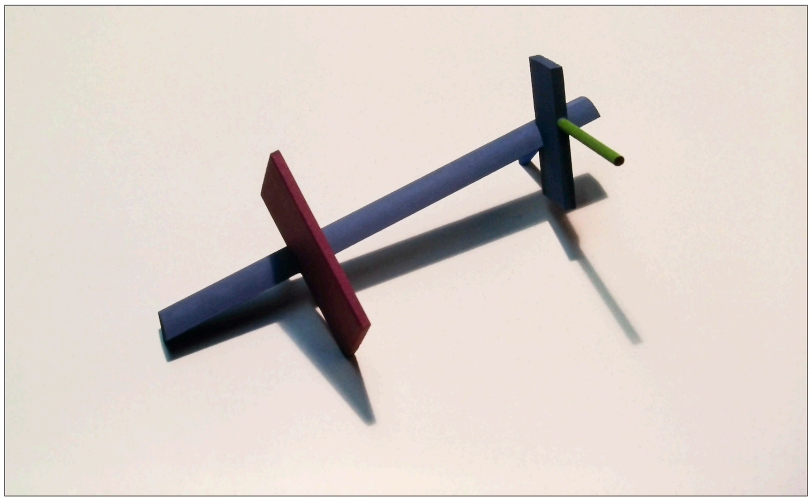


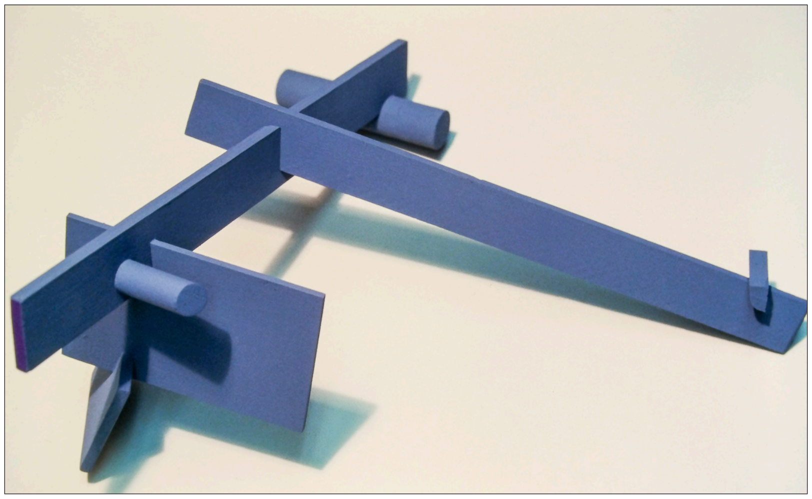


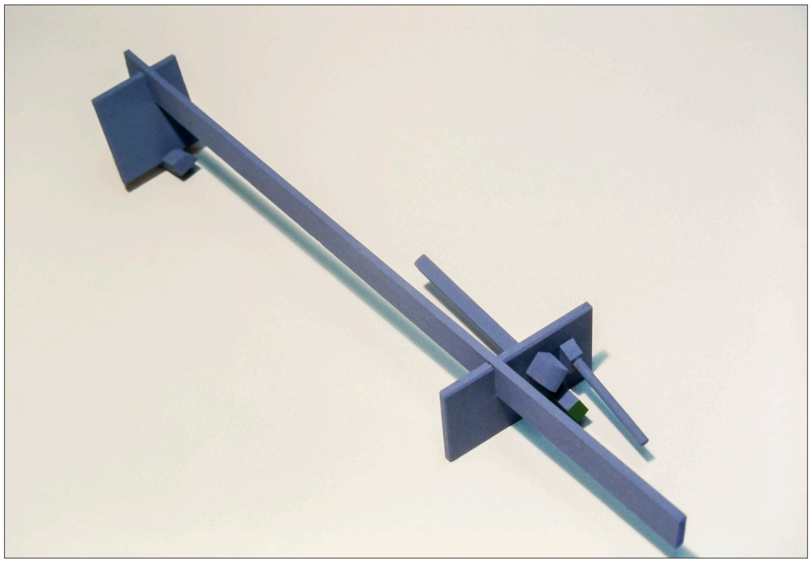


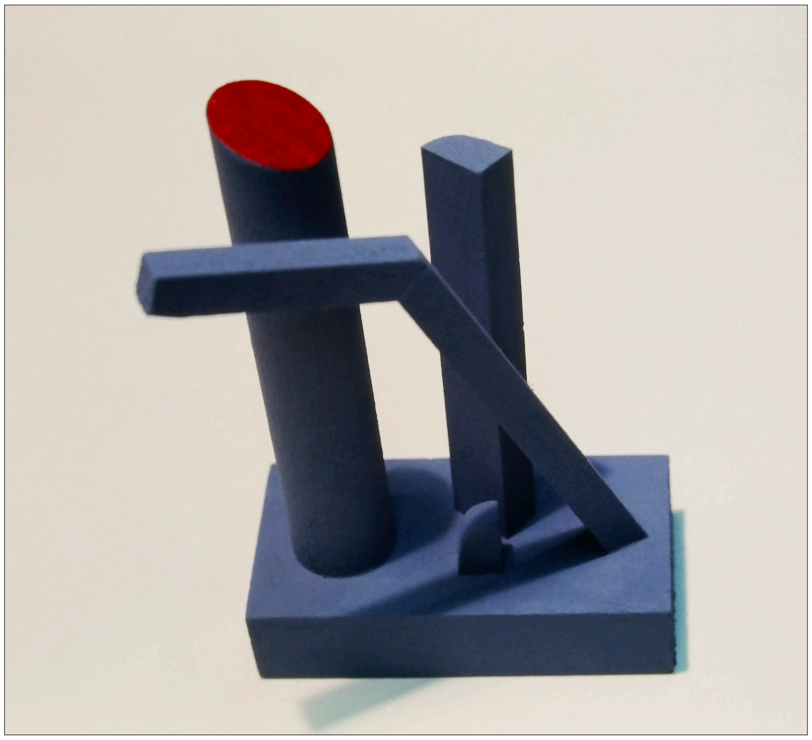
Sculptures: 1989

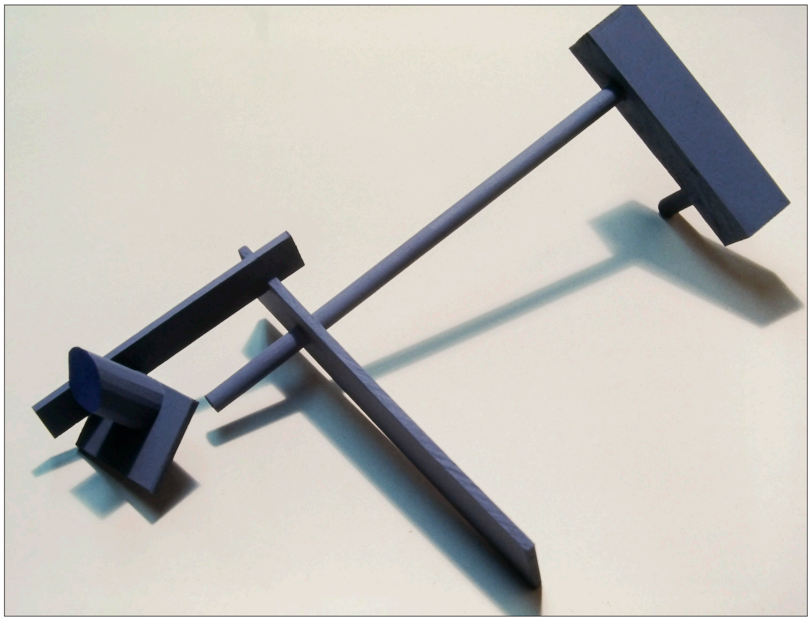


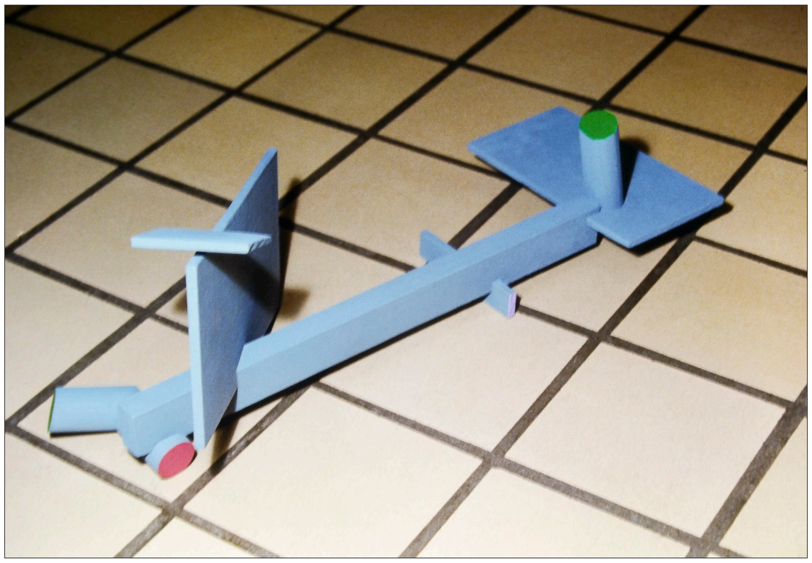


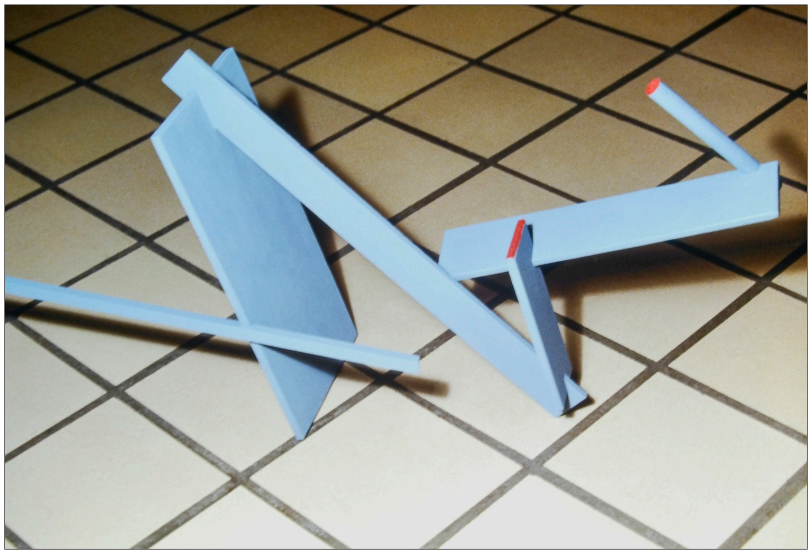


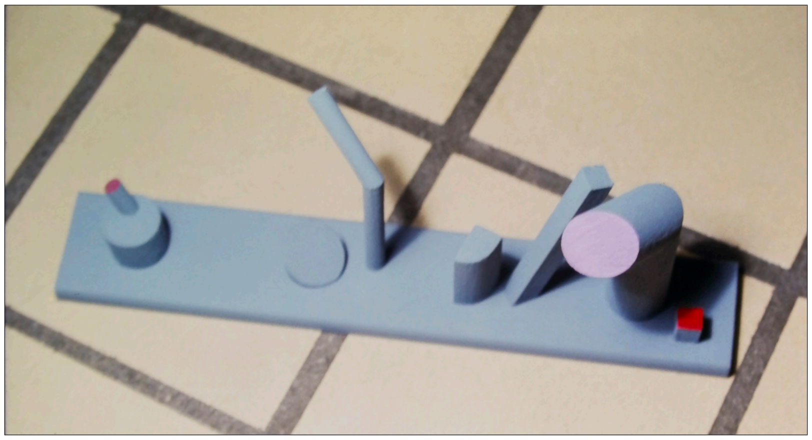












Reflections in Time Interview: April 1989

On April 4, 1989, my father sat down for a videotaped interview with UNO communications professor Paul Borge as part of UNO's "Reflections in Time" series. Their discussion picks up where my father's memoirs (pages 476–509) leave off, when Dad decides at Albion College to pursue a career in art.

Announcer: UNO has always been an expanding university constantly moving forward. But as we move forward we must also look back to where we began. Let's go back in time with the people who remember UNO the way it was. Join us for "Reflections in Time."

Paul Borge: [speaking at camera] It's the spring of 1989. It's a beautiful day here in Omaha, and we're situated in the beautiful—quite new—health and physical education recreation faculty lounge where we do a lot of the programs that we've come to call "Reflections in Time." For a number of years now I've been involved with this and with over 50 people who've sat down with me and visited about their past, the university as they've known it over the years—the many, many years, usually that they have been involved. And that's the case today as we put another one into the locker, so to speak, these tapes are being housed at the Alumni House and over in our university library.

PB: [turns toward Peter Hill] And today we have a man with us who is a great, very creative person who's been with us as a teacher and an artist for a lot of years—actually, over 30. Peter, I've known you for all of those years. I don't believe, other than that you're from Detroit, I know much about your background. You did come from Detroit.

Peter Hill: [chuckles] I spent my whole childhood there, and all my schooling was in Michigan.

PB: Where'd you go to school, beyond high school?

PH: Albion College, in Albion, Michigan, between Jackson and Battle Creek. Corn flakes and the world's largest state prison. [laughs]

PB: Was your family—were they college people, or are you the first one to go to end up going to college? Lots of people thirty to forty years ago didn't go to college, you know.

PH: Oh, well, I was college-bound almost from the beginning. My family . . . there was no question about it. My father was a Harvard man and my mother was one hour shy of graduating from high school but went on to art school in both Boston and New York. There was never any question about the fact I go into college. Now, the art end of it, there was never any question, but there was also not much of an indication early on.

PB: Yeah, you were telling me as we were sitting and getting ready to do this tape that your undergraduate training really wasn't in the area of art, right?

Peter Hill interviewed on April 4, 1989

PH: That's right: it was economics. That was my major. [chuckles]

PB: What were you going to be, Pete, in those days?

PH: Ah, well, that's hard to say. Yeah, even then, and in my junior year when I decided I would abandon economics in a way for art for the last semester. And I ended up with two majors anyway. The reason I did that is because I had pretty well fulfilled all the requirements for the economics degree, and I had a lot of art, and I didn't want to take the kind of economics that was still available. So I wound out my senior year majoring in art, becoming more fascinated with it all the time.

PB: Was your mother's background and interest in it an encouragement in that? You mentioned that she was—

PH: In a way, I think so, yeah. I used to play hooky from choir practice in Detroit and go to the Detroit Art Institute. And sometimes I'd even cut out on Sunday. The museum was open, so I could escape. I went to church down on Woodward Avenue, and it was almost downtown Detroit. And the art institute and the public library were adjacent to each other, and you could go to either place on Sunday morning. So, if I didn't feel like going to church and singing in the choir I used to skip out. And that's a lot of the art interest started there. Especially the ancient world. I really enjoyed that. And that interest . . . uh, been going on for a long time. Anyway, the reason I could do that art business is I could waive the language requirement because in high school I had my four years of Latin. So it freed up about 12 hours.

PB: So then you really started in the field of art when you were a junior in college.

PH: That's right.

PB: Okay, you finished college, Peter. And then what happened?

PH: I went to graduate school.

PB: Where at?

PH: Cranbrook. Which is right outside of Detroit. So I was kind of lucky enough to have the Harvard of art schools right in my backyard.

PB: Now, what kind of tack did you take at the graduate level. What area of interest—you mentioned early art you were interested in as a boy and as a looker in that sort of thing, and now that you got into it more fully, what did you aspire to?

PH: Painting. Painting and a design minor. In those days you had to take a minor, which was Friday, and then four days a week you painted. And you had a few other requirements, one of them was anatomy that was more like a kinesiology course. You ended up having to learn the origins and exertion and function of all the muscles and their Latin names.

PB: [inaudible]

PH: Well, that's what they taught at about that time. All the sculptors, all the painters had to do this even though we were all smearing all over the canvas and weren't paying any attention to any real representational subjects. In those days, Pollock and Franz Kline the abstract expressionist De Kooning and Gorky were all.

PB: So you were probably scratching your head and saying, "Why am I doing this?"

PH: No, no we didn't, not in those days. We just did what we were told. It was part of it. And then there was a philosophy course we had to attend eight weeks each year and for no credit. Both of these things were no credit, necessarily. You had to pass them, though. The philosophy course, your presence was all that was necessary. They never tested us artists on things like philosophy because we'd probably come up with about ten different answers, you see. So they'd wonder what on earth [the artists] were talking about.

PB: How long were you at this graduate program, then?

PH: I was there for 18 months and it's generally a two-year degree. And I have a feeling that because I didn't take up dorm space or more than an 8-by-10-foot area they said, "Well, what the heck, let him leave a little early." [laughs] And I really would have stayed the full time. It was quite a place to be. It's like being at Versailles.

PB: And now your personal life. By this time, were you a married man, heading in that direction?

PH: Heading in that direction. I met my wife at Albion College. She was 17, and I was too old.

PB: You were too old at—

PH: I was 20.

PB: Wow.

PH: Well, she thought I was too old.

PB: Sure.

PH: I was. And she was going to be 18 in November so when she got to be 18 I think I dated her once. And then we didn't date again for quite a while, by the time she was a sophomore. And I was a senior at the time.

PB: Did she mention, Peter, I think there was a long way from 17 to 20.

PH: Well, according to her mother, that was the way that was. She was told that us older guys were dangerous, I suppose.

PB: Regardless of that, love blossomed.

PH: Well, that's right. She left Albion in her sophomore year when I went to graduate school. She went to the University of Michigan, and that's about 30 miles from Cranbrook, which made it a little easier to keep up on our correspondence. And then we did get married, and I moved to Ann Arbor for a little while, and lived there and still worked in Detroit. I was an accountant during graduate school.

PB: You were an accountant—well, there's your economics background coming into play.

PH: That's right. I didn't want to waste anything.

PB: This is wild, hearing an artist talk about being an accountant. That's not too usual, I would say.

PH: Ah . . . no, most of the artists that I know, adding and subtracting and dividing is tough.

PB: Doesn't work out for them.

PH: It's tough for them. I was a service accountant for a Caterpillar Tractor dealership, and my main job there was to keep track of international purchases of tractors. They would buy them, and take them apart, and they would put them down in the pit in pieces, and then they would have to put them back together. So, the end product was the cost for a tractor that was probably three times what they had spent, because putting them back together was more expensive than platinum. But you know, they couldn't buy them in pieces. [laughs] But anyway, that was a fun time.

PB: How long did you work at that job?

PH: Well, all during graduate school. I'd go to work at eight o'clock in the morning and be out at noon. And then I'd go to graduate school and work—my life was really on kind of a funny track. And then I'd eat lunch in the car, somewhat like I do now. I mean, I don't eat lunch in a car, but I'm always walking and eating lunch. And I'd start working on my paintings about one o'clock, and I'd work up to about seven or eight o'clock at night. I'd come home, I'd eat with my dad. My mom taught in public schools there in adult education. And then I would return to work in the morning, eight o'clock to twelve, one o'clock to eight, eat, go to bed, and then that would go on for five days, and then I'd split for Ann Arbor.

PB: Wasn't it a little hard to be creative in terms of all the painting you were trying to do and do all this other stuff, too? I'd think you'd be exhausted—

PH: Not really, no, no. The routine—

PB: Young and strong.

PH: —the more I did, the better off I was, it seemed at that time. That's not true now. [laughs]

PB: Speaking of now, we're getting a little closer toward that. But what time did this place, as the University of Omaha, as it was called then, pop into your life?

PH: It was really kind of strange. I was—

PB: You really hadn't heard of it during the years you're describing.

PH: No. No. I had sent out about three hundred resumés. The typical resumé of a person my age. I was going to school, and the courses you took, and whatever honors you could garner, and the degrees . . . you know, the things you had, and, uh, wasn't getting much luck at all, so I turned it all over to an employment bureau out of Chicago—"American College Bureau"—and it was something that Doctor [Milo] Bail had used, I guess, to hire faculty. And we got a call. And I was ready to go anyway, because it was June, and I had already had my degree since January, and Jody was just finishing her degree at the University of Michigan.

PB: Were you people married by this time?

PH: We were very married, yes. And we had some job leads in Texas, at TCU and a place called Arlington State, which is the University of Texas—Arlington, now. And they were scheduled for interviewing in July, so, you know, we were ready, but we weren't ready. We were gonna just pack up and take off, with the idea that we wanted to leave anyway, Michigan, and seek our fortune, if you will, with a bag of gold, like—

PB: [inaudible]

PH: Yes, that's right. Anyway, I got a call, and Bail had talked to my mother, and she called and related the message that we had to be out here [in Omaha] in two days. And that was late. Jody called her brother in Adrian, Michigan, and they came up to Ann Arbor and packed the trailer, and we started out with this trailer—

PB: And what year was this, Pete?

PH: 1958. And my '57 Chevy Nomad, which I wish I still had. Put that on the record. [laughs] Which I don't. It was a nice, nice car. And with this big trailer in the back—a U-Haul—and we were charging down the road. And we did get here in time for the interview. Doctor [Vic] Blackwell was here being interviewed at the same time.

PB: Let me ask you—let's pause right there, Peter. You came from the Detroit area, a big metropolitan area, where you had lived most of your life—all of your life, pretty much. Here you came out to the Middle West, a little farther. What were your first impressions of Omaha and then maybe of the university, which was certainly different.

PH: Well, right. I got lost in Elmwood Park.

PB: [laughs]

PH: For some reason I didn't come up Dodge and we got stuck on—must have been Leavenworth or some place. And we came into the park and were circling around and around, couldn't find our way out. And it was dark time, you see, that was late at night. And we had that interview the next morning. And we started charging down Dodge trying to find a place to be, and we were in some fleabag motel right out by 114th. There was a trailer park there, and there's nothing there right now. Except, well, there is a big bank there right now, but it was literally nothing at all—

PB: —out of town—

PH: It was out of town. Yeah, maybe it wasn't even that far. Maybe it was 132nd, I don't know. 114th, 132nd . . . well, anyway. It was a tired time. In those days, you know, the Iowa roads had curbs on them—

PB: [nods] —you bet. They weren't very wide.

PH: And they weren't very wide. And that damn trailer went up on the curb and we were just rocking around.

PB: Rocking around in a truck. Great stuff.

PH: Yeah. But we made it. And we came in. And as far as my impression of Omaha, it didn't take long to get through it. Not compared to Detroit.

PB: [laughs]

PH: Except we did get, as I say, lost. We didn't know what we were doing. And the first impression of the university is that it was a nice-looking campus. We were very impressed by that stand of pines, which is still there on the east side. And coming into the campus, it was in June, things hadn't burned out yet, and it was a very exciting time for us.

PB: But all these buildings weren't here.

PH: Oh, no. Nothing, hardly. The Fieldhouse, the Eppley Library, and the administration building, which is Arts and Science Hall.

PB: Yeah, but for those watching this tape, when you say "Eppley Library," they think of it now in the eighties and nineties as the Eppley Building for Administration.

PH: That's right. All the administration was in what is now Arts and Science Hall. Doctor Bail was right below us in the art department, which was probably kind of an exciting time for him because we used to make a lot of noise up there.

PB: [laughs] All you creative people.

PH: Yeah.

PB: Now, you've mentioned him [Bail] two or three times, and that's why you came here, because he asked you to come and visit with him. How about your first impressions of people on this campus. The first person I suppose you really met was probably Doctor Bail.

PH: That's right. And Thelma Angle was his part-time secretary then. Because his regular, Mrs. Spengler, she was on vacation. And Thelma, she wasn't a typist, you know, and she had to type these contracts for us. This is after I got the job. Even though we felt that we were—I really wasn't very interested in Texas, really, for several reasons. But we at that particular time in Michigan in '58, we were in recession. It hadn't touched Omaha, it seemed. We were quite pleased and rather bewildered, because Omaha was not experiencing the same problems that Michigan was.

PB: [inaudible] answer about why you stayed. You were sort of on to Texas in a way but you stayed [inaudible]

PH: There were several things. The Dallas–Fort Worth area, it didn't interest me, I think. And Omaha, what you might call the Upper Midwest, was more interesting at the time. And, well the job market here was paying about twelve hundred dollars more per year. The salary here was something like forty-six [hundred] and those Texas salaries were thirty-four, thirty-two.

PB: Well, now, the art department when you and Jody came here was kind of small, wasn't it?

PH: That's right. We were two and a half people.

PB: Who were the two and a half people?

PH: Well, there was Vic [Blackwell] and me and Jane Anderson, who was half a person. You remember Jane.

PB: Yes, I do.

PH: Well, the reason she was half time is that she was working with the education college, and at that time, student supervision of art students was held in the education college. And then she taught the art ed courses. Or it may have been the other way around . . . but nevertheless she was only half an FTE, we called it, a "Full-Time Equivalent." And Jane, we finally got her over full time. And then we had a lot of part-time people. Steve Pulcher, who was working at Boys Town, was teaching ceramics and sculpture. There were several others that were here just the year before, but they weren't at that time, we had cleaned the slate, we kept Steve on because he was a good ceramist, and Steve was one of the reasons I got the job.

PB: Wasn't Doctor Bail—

PH: Doctor Bail was very impressed by Cranbrook people. At least he was very impressed by Steve. I don't know how that would follow, necessarily, but thank goodness for Steve Pulcher. And the irony of a lot of this is the fact that no one asked me to see my work. Even though we went through that dean's review process.

PB: They didn't ask to see anything you'd done?

PH: Not a thing.

PB: You had it all available.

PH: I did. I had my slides, and I had to force it on them. I showed Dean Thompson, and I showed . . . who was the adult education? Don Emery. But they didn't ask. I could have done anything. But you know in those days they didn't question anything—

PB: You could have been an economist instead of an—

PH: That's right. Well, I did have my degrees, though, so I could prove them, you know. There's a few instances on this campus where degrees are somewhat suspect—

PB: —yeah—

PH: —and then have—well, they trusted me. So that was nice.

PB: When you began here as part of that very small two-and-a-half person art department, what was our art program like? What were we doing with and for students at that time as you recall?

PH: Well, we had a BFA degree. And it was a complete program with an incomplete faculty. We had really no business offering that degree. And almost all the courses, the seeds of all the courses that we have now were there. Now subsequently we've done a lot of work in art history, adding courses. And breaking up courses. We might be running—for instance, survey was one semester. We'd run from the cave paintings through the contemporary or the modern in one course. Well, there's no way you could handle that sort of thing. I mean, you go three thousand years in one lecture [laughs] in order to cover things properly. So, anyway, we broke that one up. And then we started busting up the Renaissance into north and south. The modern used to cover from the seventeenth century to the present. Well, that was ridiculous. The seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries should have been busted up, and that subsequently was done. And, from two-and-a-half faculty we're now something around eleven.

PB: Were those young men and women—and our older ones if they were delayed people—were they people who were intending to be artists, or were they in art education, mainly? What kinds of people were we getting as students, Pete?

PH: The mix is just about the same. There are people intending to be teachers of art. There were people who wanted to study art seriously with the idea of going on for advanced degrees. That's the kind of thing we encourage. There were old, young, people coming back to school—same situation.

PB: So that part hasn't really changed.

PH: No, I think our mix—and that's one of the pluses I think here at the university for me over the years is that you're not dealing with the traditional students in the terms where you go off, you know, say you're going to Wesleyan and then your freshmen are all eighteen, or seventeen like Jody was when I met her. And you get a nice mixture of people.

PB: Along that line, I was intending I guess to ask you a little later in our time together, Pete, but I'll ask it now. The student, and that's the important reason we've been here, are the people we try to work with and to help in various ways. Do you think the students of 1958 and '60 and '61 were much different in their aims and what they were like, let's say, than students in 1989 as we record this program?

PH: [pauses] I never really—

PB: It's a tough question.

PH: —yeah, I never thought about it—

PB: —[inaudible] and you pick so many of them, hundreds of them—

PH: Uh. There's been cycles of students. I think right now the student is much like it was when I was first here. They're all kind of searching around. Willing to accept a lot of things. A lot more liberal than they were, let's say, during the Vietnam era, where it—there was kind of a split in society as we know, and there were the older professors, older teachers, and I was getting older, at that time, where there wasn't the respect, I don't think. Somehow the young people thought they were being betrayed, or had been betrayed, by "the system," so to speak, if you remember those days. And still on this campus things were very quiet compared to a lot of campuses. The only time I remember here that things got a little hairy was during the—when they went into Cambodia, and that was the toughest time.

PB: As I recall, we had one sit-in in the president's office or in the hall up there, didn't we?

PH: Yeah. But compared to a lot of campuses, it was not much.

PB: But I think what you described, sort of like a pendulum, the student now is—

PH: Yeah. Over the last ten years or so, it's been like that. It's been easier to teach under those circumstances because people come in and they really listen.

PB: Something you mentioned—and I didn't want to leave quite yet—you mentioned that when you came here, how small the art department was. Of course the university was small—

PH: —about 6,800, I think was the . . .

PB: Well, we're at double that and more, now, of course, but the art program, you tried to give that bachelor of arts with a small faculty, you have a big program, that was true of a lot of other programs on campus, too, wasn't it? We were sort of understaffed early.

PH: I would think so. Really, my own concern was the art department. I remember the music department back of the Fieldhouse and trying to do what they had to do in the mess that that was. Can you imagine? And those rooms! They were temporary, and I imagine the music sounded awful, and . . . there were a lot of problems, I think.

PB: I wanted to spend some time with you on that, Peter. A lot of people may not know what you've taught on this campus, how you've touched hundreds of lives and thousands of lives of students, but your work is more enduring than much of our work because you are a painter, which you started out to be a lot of years ago. Tell us a little bit about that part of your life, because that's been the other part of your life along with teaching, that's consumed much of your time and much of your creative life. Let's talk about how that really got started for you, Peter.

PH: Okay. The painting business is very important to the teaching, I think. My own feeling about it is that if I don't, and hadn't, kept painting, I wouldn't be a very good teacher. I would have developed into more of what I call art education than . . . I would be more "the teacher" than "the artist–teacher" kind of situation. Well, anyway, there was always the danger of becoming complacent about your situation, you know, where you're just teaching. Painting now and again, if there's a faculty show, well, that's not what I particularly wanted. I paint and do approximately thirty pieces a year.

PB: Do you? This has been an average for you all these years?

PH: Oh, that's probably a low average.

PB: Is that right.

PH: Yeah, when you think about sometimes when I get on a "toot," so to speak, and I might push out during vacations, during times where I got time, I might paint two or three a week. Get 'em going. I'm into some three-dimensional things now. And I have a lot of stuff—

PB: Now, is that a pattern in your work? Did you do one thing and then something else—impressionistic work, this, that—?

PH: I think it's been an evolution. Now, if you look at a bunch of slides, you have to realize you're dealing with thirty years, and I can go through that process sometimes in forty-five minutes to a half hour, and it looks like I've just changed dramatically from point A to point Z, the end of the line. That's not at all the way I view it. Early on I was very attached to abstract expressionism, which is more free shmear painting, I call it. I'm not a dribbler or a dripper, but I did shmear. And there were a few what I call "creative dribbles" here and there. "Happy accidents," we used to call them, "happy accidents." Well, anyway. For about the first ten years here I was involved in that kind of thing. But by about '68 or so I started to move away and get into something I've been very interested in, which is the more hard-edge painting, which is probably what you're more familiar with than the earlier pieces. And I changed from oil to acrylic, which made it possible for this sort of technique to evolve.

PB: Describe the technique in a little more detail, frankly, when you say the "hard edge."

PH: Well, what it is, is . . . well, what I call "the mindless method" [laughs] because that's pretty much what it amounts to. It's the outcome of the painting. With abstract expressionism it's the act of painting that seems to be the more satisfying thing about the painting, while you're doing it, so to speak. Well, with my kind of work right now, it's after it's all over, the satisfaction comes in. The other is kind of a "method"—

PB: From the artist's point of view.

PH: Yeah, from an artist's point of view. And I think, obviously, when people aren't artists, they look at pictures, they don't realize the process necessarily anyway. But with abstract expressionism the process is very important for the outcome in terms of the emotional involvement of the artist. Well, within a hard-edge painting, everything is done with straight lines and flat colors, brush strokes are not in evidence. I've been tempted from time to time to drift and balance both ideas, but that's not the way it operates. But it's, as I say, the last thing you do, you finally see the picture, and I use masking tape in my work and try to figure out all the different ways masking tape can make for something that's very personal, which is sometimes a little hard because it's a very mechanical process, while you sit around waiting for things to dry.

PB: Do the mechanics of painting get in the way of the feelings that you're having trying to create because at the time frame you're working in . . . you understand what I'm saying?

PH: Yeah, no. Because I know pretty much what I want to do.

PB: Has it always been that way? Or did this come after years of experience—

PH: Well, it's years. Years and years of stuff, of working out problems and color ideas and compositions, whatever.

PB: You know, I want to ask you this, Peter, as a person who has enjoyed art—not that I've understood a lot of it—but I can enjoy it. That's the thing about music and art, you can enjoy all these art forms even if you don't know a lot. I was wondering, just, from the time you have an idea or a feeling, till I can see it down at Joslyn as I have seen your work and hundreds of other people's . . . The process. You mentioned the process a while ago. What kind of a process does Peter go through to create one of those thirty paintings that you described here a while ago.

PH: Well—

PB: Are there steps that always occur, usually?

PH: Uh . . . I still approach—and this could go on forever, Paul—approach my paintings pretty much as I did when I was working with the shmear. The last painting, it probably dictates what the next one is going to be, going to do. That's that process, you know, from one to the next, and into curves [?] form of the evolution that . . . uh, it's a matter of going through the process of bringing in fairly, uh, a few elements and then dropping in a few more things. I always feel a painting needs—and this may be hard to understand—four or five "hits," so to speak, four or five different decisions that you make on the surface. With some artists who are minimalists—and you've probably heard that term both in music and in art and in literature it even appears now—whereby, uh, two or three decision times, that's it, when the artist is over. With my work, it always goes, I think, further. That takes me out of that range of being what they call a minimalist.

PB: It's like chapters of a book, it's got stages—

PH: —yeah, that's right—

PB: —it's got high points, the painting—

PH: Well right, you develop your picture, and then you start to embellish it, or what I call "finesse" it.

PB: And embellishments are the stages that you're describing.

PH: Well, the last few decisions will either make it or break it.

PB: Does a painting ever start out being one thing and end up being something completely almost different?

PH: Only when I wreck it. Only when I lose it. And that's when I rip it. And I do that once or twice a year, where I, what I call, "lose" a painting. Where I take it right off the canvas.

PB: You know when that time has come, huh?

PH: Yeah. One thing I might mention, back in those days you know we had that full program. And we had few faculty. The painters and the studio people were expected to teach art history. And those were the days, you know, when you wore coats and ties, and, uh, even in the studio you'd take your coat off but you wouldn't take your tie off.

PB: As you're dressed today.

PH: That's right. That's what they called the "Mutual of Omaha" mentality. But anyway, I taught all the art histories except oriental and medieval, and the only reason I didn't teach medieval was that was Blackwell's specialty. And then, when Tom Majeski came five years after I got here, he had to take over the Renaissance. And that, of course, would be interesting for you to talk to Tom, then, about his experiences in Renaissance art history as well as the humanities lectures that we were asked to give. And that's like throwing a Christian into the lion's den in the Colosseum.

PB: Did you get involved with Doctor Paine in those days?

PH: Oh, yeah. And then Wordle after that. And you could imagine a painter having to talk to all those people . . . I felt that I had done art more harm than any good. Even though one time I got an applause. Now, I don't know what that was for. It was either that they were so glad I was done—

PB: Except that [inaudible] doing great.

PH: Yeah, and those were those fifty-dollar extra lectures.

PB: [inaudible]

PH: That's right. And the summer school days were the days where—those were to pay my insurance. And I taught summer school for thirteen years.

PB: Started to make it.

PH: Yeah. And I taught one art history and one studio. That way I'd save a little time. Because, you know, those are those five-week-long sessions, and they used to try to pack in fifteen weeks in five weeks. It'd drive you—I haven't done that in a long time. I don't know how they can handle it.

PB: Summer school was sort of a specialty item, and in some areas, uh, lab work, it was ghastly, wasn't it. And in the creative areas, too.

PH: Because we were the only air-conditioned campus, you know, in this part of the world. And that building was cold, if you remember.

PB: One thing now I'd like to ask you, Peter. Over the years, along with the students and we've talked about your own work a bit, I'd like to hear you talk about some other things. Like the people around you. All these years you've been here, any interesting stories and people that stand out in memory that you want to put on that [inaudible]?

PH: Okay, uh . . . the introduction of life drawing.

PB: Oh, yeah, that's interesting.

PH: Right. It's a natural. Life drawing for me is the Latin of art. It goes back to that course—remember, I took anatomy.

PB: Oh, yeah.

PH: You know, where you wonder why we're doing it, and matter of fact, I wrote the syllabus for the life drawing here. And we just introduced it. And in those days—and we still do—the syllabus goes before a committee, and they look at it very carefully, and one of the considerations was the fact that this course be responsible. Because, after all, there were nudes involved, you know. At Albion College we cloaked our nudes with leotards. That was the way that was done at that time. Well, I approached it like the course I had in anatomy and wrote the syllabus as someone who would be studying anatomy almost from a clinical standpoint. Really, what would be considered a kinesiology course, I think, in health education. Well, anyway, we got the course through. And there were two questions asked at one time. They wondered how appropriate it would be for nudes to be around in the daytime. That was one thing. And then the other thing was that the archdiocese office—you know where it was at one time—it still is over there, and the bishop was living right across the way, whether that was appropriate for this nude to be so close to the church. Well, I thought, that sounds really strange, but okay, I just thought it was appropriately far enough away. I thought, it must be about 300 yards. [laughs] Maybe a quarter of a mile, even. Well, anyway, as I said, we got it through, and I started teaching it. We did have a hard time finding models right away. I used to say, "Nudes only come out at night." That's what I used to say. So we had Tuesday and Thursday afternoon classes, and then sometimes we'd offer nighttime training, which was hard, because those were those five-hour sessions, and it was very difficult to find someone who works. But anyway, we offered those in both the daytime and night.

It's funny, it seemed to work out better in the daytime with three-hour sessions than it did at night. But—we used to let the model take a break in between classes, you know, we didn't want a model in a robe wandering around in the hallway while people were passing in the hall. And remember, in those days the bell used to ring—

PB: You betcha.

PH: —and they rang at 10 minutes to, and they rang off at the hour, and you were to be out of those hallways. And anyway, then, smoking—you remember smoking was taboo anywhere but in the offices and then on the first floor. [Inaudible]. Well, if you know where our art offices were, and Bail's office, it was the first great confrontation between me and Bail. And, uh, Bail and I, we had a good relationship. We always did, really. But this one time, it was strained. A couple of the students were smoking right by his office in the hallway there. And he came out of his office and saw them there and punched them on the head with his pencil and wanted to know what they were doing, why they were doing that, and where did they come from? Well, these students were late coming back. And Bail marched them up—by the way, subsequently, this one student is a PhD art historian at John Carroll [University].

PB: I bet he never forgets this incident.

PH: Bet he never forgets this incident. His name is Bob Catcher. Proper sort of guy, went to the University of Chicago to get his degree, or Western Reserve or someplace like that. Well anyway, Bail comes into the room. It's the art ed room now. The model is standing on the podium there on her little stand, and she had just dropped her robe. And she was a beautiful red-haired woman. [laughs] Bail comes charging in that room, looking this way and that way, reaming everyone out about smoking in the wrong place and not being in class on time, and turned around and went out as if that naked woman, nude, was not even there.

PB: Didn't even exist.

PH: Not even there. Well, anyway, about three days later, I was walking down to campus to eat. And Bail came out. I explained what was going on. And he immediately apologized for interfering with class. You know, because he realized he had jumped in—he didn't miss that nude. He acted like he did. He saw right through her. But he thought, Wouldn't it be wise if they were covered a little? I—and then Blackwell got a note from him, but that's another scenario—we didn't go around covering up the nudes, because that would have been worse than what had transpired. But anyway, he apologized for busting into my class. Bail, as you know, he knew what was going on every minute.

PB: Mm-hm. He knew what was going on, and you knew exactly what he felt.

PH: I always appreciated that in a lot of ways. I realize that some faculty thought he was somewhat of a tyrant. [laughs] He may have well—

PB: Well, twenty-five years ago, the times, as they say, maybe it was different, wasn't it?

PH: Oh, yeah.

PB: The things you're telling now, in today's world, would go unnoticed. That's an interesting story. There were so many interesting people back in those years . . . . One thing I wanted to ask, Peter, was about the merger, because that took place. We were a municipal university, and then we weren't. It took place in rather a hurry. How did you feel about that when it started coming on, Peter?

PH: I was very positive about it. Reading everything about the [?] and trying to get money into the university and the faculty salaries, the way they were, and . . . it looked like tough times ahead. And, as much as Bail had funded us well, I mean, he had taken care of the funding aspect of these buildings; they were paid for before they put a brick into them. I thought that becoming part of the University of Nebraska system, I had had some contact down there with Norman Geske. As a matter of fact, one of the best moments of my life was in '63 when I was asked to have a show—to open the gallery. And I thought that was—well, I was in disbelief at the time. I thought, "Boy, I had heaven right here on earth." But anyway, I thought the merger was a good thing. And subsequently there've been some difficulties, but I think without it, this university wouldn't be half of what it is right now. Who knows what it would have been? I think there would have been a university, but I don't know.

PB: I wanted to ask you, the university to you and me, for over thirty years and more, is people, not buildings. Other people come to mind as you reflect—you mentioned Vic Blackwell, and Milo, and Dean Thompson. Are there other people that stand out in your memory that had a big contribution to you personally, or to the university you feel generally?

PH: Well—

PB: That come to mind.

PH: Yeah . . . Well, Dean Thompson. I remember when I was—faculty meetings. We had to go to faculty meetings. And I remember being caught in the middle of negotiations for carpeting with Mrs. B [from Nebraska Furniture Mart], and calling him up and saying I'd be late for faculty meeting. And I dealt straight with the dean. I didn't deal with Vic. I was funny about that. Because Vic was so low-key. He didn't care what you were doing. He didn't know who you were dealing with. Well, I used to call him [Dean Thompson] and find out what kind of raise I was getting. Because he'd never tell me. And in those days—a university was kind of a strange thing for me, anyway, because when I first came here—you know, I came out of Albion, which was 1,200 students. Cranbrook was 150! So I was always dealing with small. So 6,800 was a mob!

PB: Big.

PH: Big. A big deal. And Jody went to the University of Michigan, and there were 25,000 there. That was unreal, I thought. You know, that campus just went on forever. I couldn't—I'd've probably gotten lost there. Anyway, Dean Thompson, he said, "Don't worry, just strike a good deal." I said okay. And then Dean Lucas, I remember dealing with him. And, uh, McGregor, for a long time, but he was gone pretty much the third or fourth year I was here. And . . . oh golly . . . Emery, I remember we moved down to the Legion Building for the art department. It was right across from Central High. A lot of people don't remember that one.

PB: I'd forgotten that.

PH: Yeah. Okay, we went down there and it wasn't ready yet, so it was hard to have a class. And Emery got a little upset with us because we couldn't hold classes. I said, "I just can't hold people for five hours, talking to them." [laughs] And, he somewhat appreciated that. I always felt, thank goodness he left [laughs] and went off to be a superintendent of schools in Cleveland somewhere. Because he didn't really appreciate that answer. So we hurried to get that building done. That was a very good deal, by the way, but it's another example of fragmenting that really didn't work out. The students really liked it. They'd cemented over the swimming pool, and the ceramics—

PB: When was this?

PH: Oh, it had to be the middle 60s—

PB: —middle 60s—

PH: —the last of Bail's years—

PB: [inaudible] took place in '68.

PH: Yeah. We came back. Remember, when I was here, ceramics was taught on the fourth floor of the administration building, the old arts and sciences hall, now. And then the kiln was in the basement, which was very hard to get it up, because the smokestack went up five stories, and the heat just got taken right off. And you could fire it for twenty hours and just get what we call "bisqueware." Twenty hours! And you gotta watch it, because if the thing had muffled it would've blown up the building.

PB: Blown up—

PH: You didn't know that, did ya?

PB: No! I'm lucky to be alive.

PH: Yeah, you are. With *that* kiln. And of course, as I said, I taught sculpture, ceramics . . . taught some printmaking. Everything but, as I said, oriental and medieval. Then we instituted primitive. We haven't taught that much lately. But we did all that stuff.

PB: So, we've got about ten minutes or so to go on our arc together here visiting, Peter, and what I wanted to ask you, especially as a creative person like you, I think what might be a loaded question. But for all these years, now, you've done, along with a lot of other things, I should imagine, you've painted, and you've taught. As you've looked back over the years, if you'd had your druthers, did you like this way? Would you rather have done only one thing or the other?

PH: Oh. You know, it's gone by so fast, that I can hardly believe . . . I can remember going through Elmwood Park, going to that fleabag motel, and going up, and—we lived across from Fontanelle Park on 48th Street, near Ames, by Abbouds. Matter of fact, the day Jody was supposed to graduate from University of Michigan, she was serving spaghetti dinner to her brother who was on a junket across the country with a friend.

PB: [laughs]

PH: And we were all settled in by that time, and had our job. And on Monday I was going to work.

PB: It happened in a hurry, didn't it?

PH: Oh, it was really something.

PB: As you say, it's gone fast. So then you've enjoyed what you've been doing.

PH: Oh, yeah. I wouldn't change too much. Made a lot of friends here. It's been great. And the painting and the teaching all have been very enjoyable. And the students.

PB: And you've become more and more recognized, you've had shows, you've moved around with your work. Tell us a little more about that aspect of your work.

PH: The best thing about painting is that they're all an inch-and-a-half to two inches wide. You can ship 'em out. And in those days, almost every little museum, big, and medium-sized—the Nelson, the St. Louis Museum, Denver, Minneapolis—had competitive shows. And you could participate, and sometimes you got invited. You went in with the rest of the people. And those kind of competitions were bread and butter for a long time, too.

PB: That doesn't—

PH: Doesn't happen too much, anymore.

PB: [inaudible]

PH: Well, they cost too much. The insurance alone, I guess, has killed a lot of them. Museums are not as directed toward regionalism too much anymore, they're looking more toward international things. Pictures have gotten very expensive, too. There's only one regional show right now in this area, and that's still the Joslyn Biennial. And I imagine in the next ten years it'll be gone.

PB: Is that right. So then, unless a person has a name, and you've acquired that, how does one share his work?

PH: Well—

PB: [inaudible]

PH: That's right. The sales galleries in the area are there. My first viewing, you know, in Omaha was on the courthouse lawn.

PB: Is that right.

PH: Right there. The Associated Artists of Omaha had an open show, and I sent my work, and then one of the other things, I've shown at the Dundee Dell.

PB: Right up the street—

PH: You didn't remember that, did you? I've shown there, a guy named Steve Cohen, a student whose uncle and father owned it, and ran it. He went to Lincoln and then came up here and he developed a show for there. And a funny incident there was, they made me take my paintings out for the noon crowd disagreed with—I was painting nudes at the time. Figurative paintings.

PB: You had to take it out during the lunch hour?

PH: Lunch hour. Night was okay. They liked 'em at night, but at lunch hour they objected to them.

PB: That sort of goes back to the art course—nudes in the daytime or the evening.

PH: That's right. The nudes come out at night. But you know what's funny, I said it didn't really work out that way. We could find models more in the daytime than we could at night.

PB: Well, you know, looking back over it, thirty years and more, I know you've had a lot of peaks and valleys in your personal as well as your professional life. I guess I'd ask you the question of what the university has really meant to you, if you could put that into some sort of wording. It's been a part of you now for so long that maybe it's hard to sort out.

PH: Yeah . . . It really is. It's hard to separate your feelings on that. I've always been appreciative of the fact of it being directed toward higher education. And in fact, my dad, when I was in the last six months of my graduate career, he said, "Well, what do you think you're going to do?" That's the first time that question was ever asked. But I did spring the art major business on them rather late. But my mother thought that was fine. My dad did, too. As long as I was doing all right, he didn't care. And I said, "Well, I think I'll go teach art in college. It will afford me the time to develop as a painter. And I'll use that time." I mean, I'm not one to say I'll do something and then not do it.

PB: And you've been doing it.

PH: Yeah, and I've kept the faith, in that regard. And I think the universities are patrons in the arts. It was the anchor that I had over the years. And it kept me experimental, too. If I had to, let's say, depend on art to make a living, I'd've probably been an accountant.

PB: Uh-huh.

PH: [laughs] Because I wouldn't have been comfortable with that kind of situation, where you've got to be more commercial, that you do—

PB: It really left you with the freedom to do your thing.

PH: Oh, yeah. And I think universities generally do that. And I think it's wise that they keep that attitude, too. It's important that the university has retained the research focus that should be there. To actually fund the impractical.

PB: Fund the impractical. That's one of the many reasons we're here.

PH: That's right.

PB: Speaking of here, we've about run out of time on our tape. But you've shared a lot of your life, Peter, and a lot of your work, and I appreciate that, and I think our friends over the years at the university will enjoy seeing what we've had a chance to do here today.

PH: Well, we could go on for another couple of hours. It's my pleasure.

PB: [turns toward camera] We've been visiting here, as I told you a good part of an hour ago, in the lounge of the health physical education building here at the university. My guest for this hour as a part of his tape has been Professor Peter Hill, who has spent a lot of his life here at the university. We thank him, and we thank every last one of you for sitting down and being with us for "Reflections in Time."

Lines, Ts, Catches: 1990 to 1994

To hear my father tell it (which he often did, in the boat in Canada), Omaha's art scene during the 1950s and 1960s was okay—neither great nor terrible.

On the plus side, the Sheldon had opened, local museums were holding exhibits for Midwestern artists, and Midwestern universities were hosting important shows from the East and West Coasts. But Dad tended to gripe about the Joslyn (I am very sorry, Joslyn owner of this book). In his own words to the *Doane Owl* in 1964: "Omaha is not the Mecca of art that it should be, because Joslyn museum doesn't have the patronage and money to be a little uncompromising." I can imagine him saying those same words in 1994. And he knew very well that it was almost impossible for an Omaha artist to get recognized much beyond the surrounding states unless he or she really busted their tail (i.e., worked hard) to push their art beyond the Midwest.

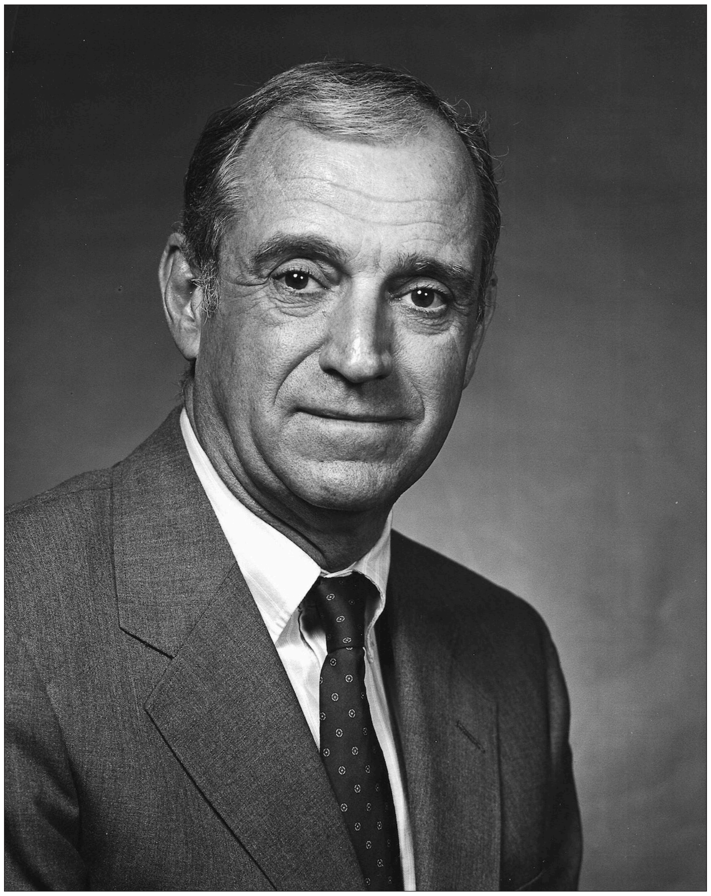
As far as my father was concerned, Omaha's support of the arts never really got better. In fact, he felt it got worse. Over the decades, local newspapers folded, leaving the *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Lincoln Journal-Star* the only players in town. Coverage of local artistic events dwindled; can you imagine a small newspaper running a two-page feature on an artist today as they did in the 1960s? And, public patronage of art faded in the face of a rising ideology that government monies should not support or encourage anything smacking of elite culture. Here in 2022 that trend is pronounced. Some politicians, when they hear the word "culture," reflexively reach for their veto pens.

So, he focused on his teaching, and on his painting, and on his family, and that had to be enough.

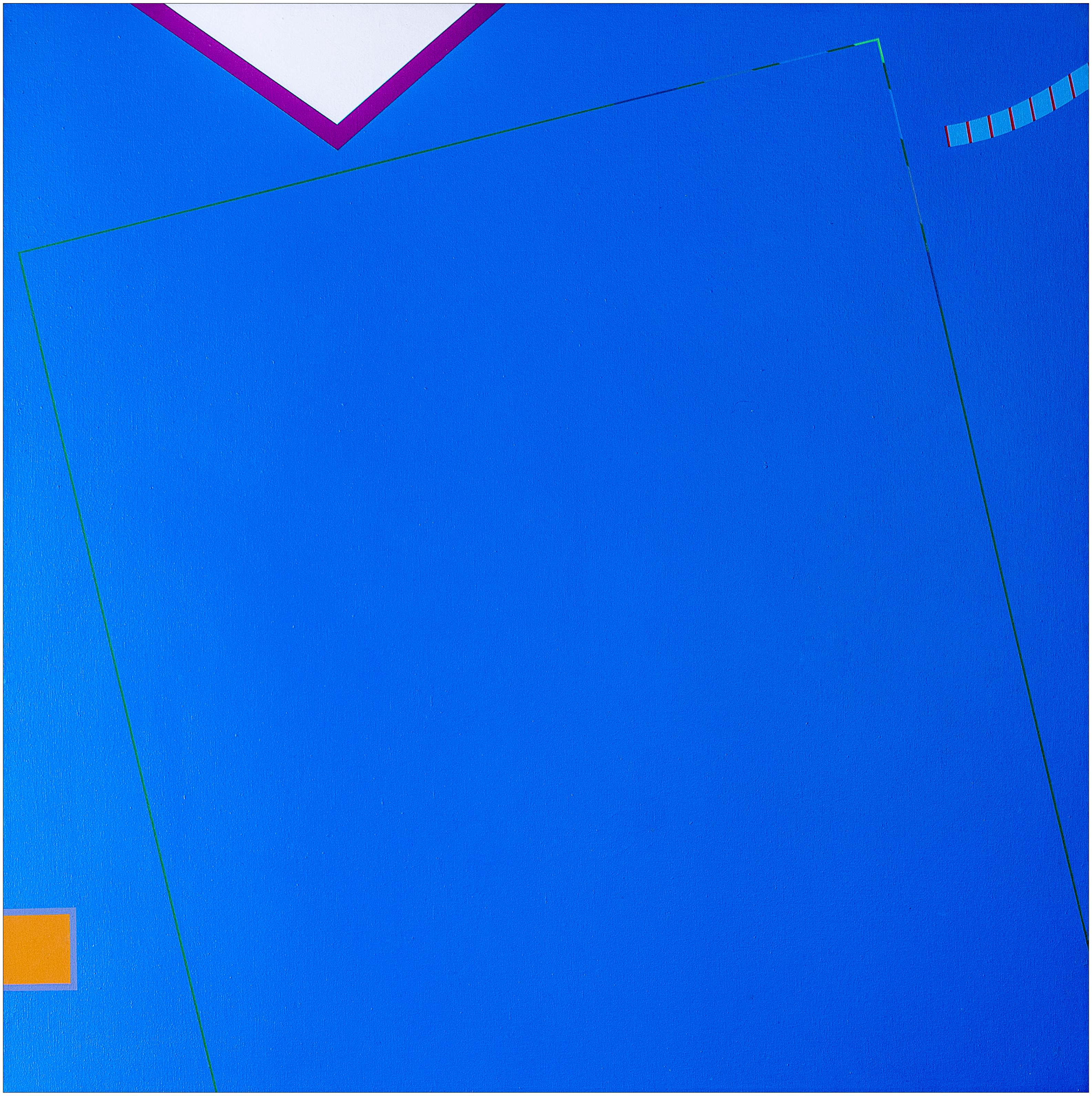
Stylistically, Dad seemed to be casting around again. Not as much as in the early 1970s, but still looking for something he could investigate thoroughly. The "Line" series provides slender and perfectly straight edges forming unfilled squares in vast fields, but he only made a few of those. The "T" and "Catch" series are much busier. These feature sinewy shapes bisecting his canvases vertically and flanked on either side by trapezoids.

He seemed to enjoy using slender masking tape to produce rivulets of wavy lines, maybe as much a technical challenge for himself as a visual pleasure for others. It's odd to think of "technological improvements" to something as ordinary as masking tape, but it's possible that over the decades the tape improved, giving him more control to produce desired effects. The same might hold true for acrylics. But he'd likely roll his eyes at these ideas, thinking them incidental to his practice. They're not—our products can only be as precise as our tools—but it's not anything he would have spent time thinking about.

There were two milestones in this time. First, by mid-1993, all but one of his children were out of the home. Plenty of grandchildren kept coming, though, proving that the cabin's addition was an excellent idea. Second, at the end of 1993, my sixty-year-old father went half-time in his teaching. Semi-retirement didn't leave him at loose ends, though. It freed him to paint and pursue other interests. As I said, my father knew not to waste time.

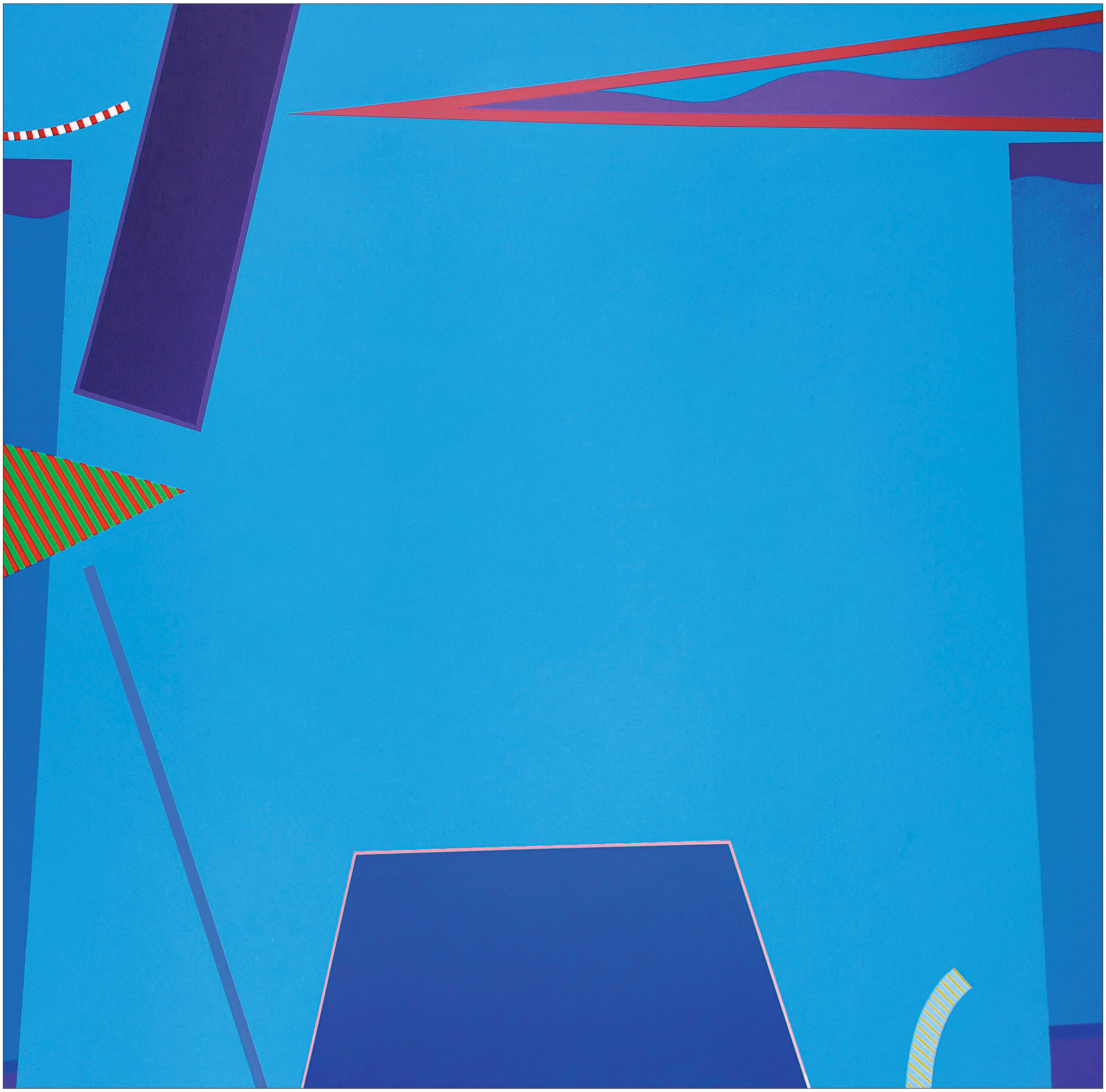


Peter Hill at age 62



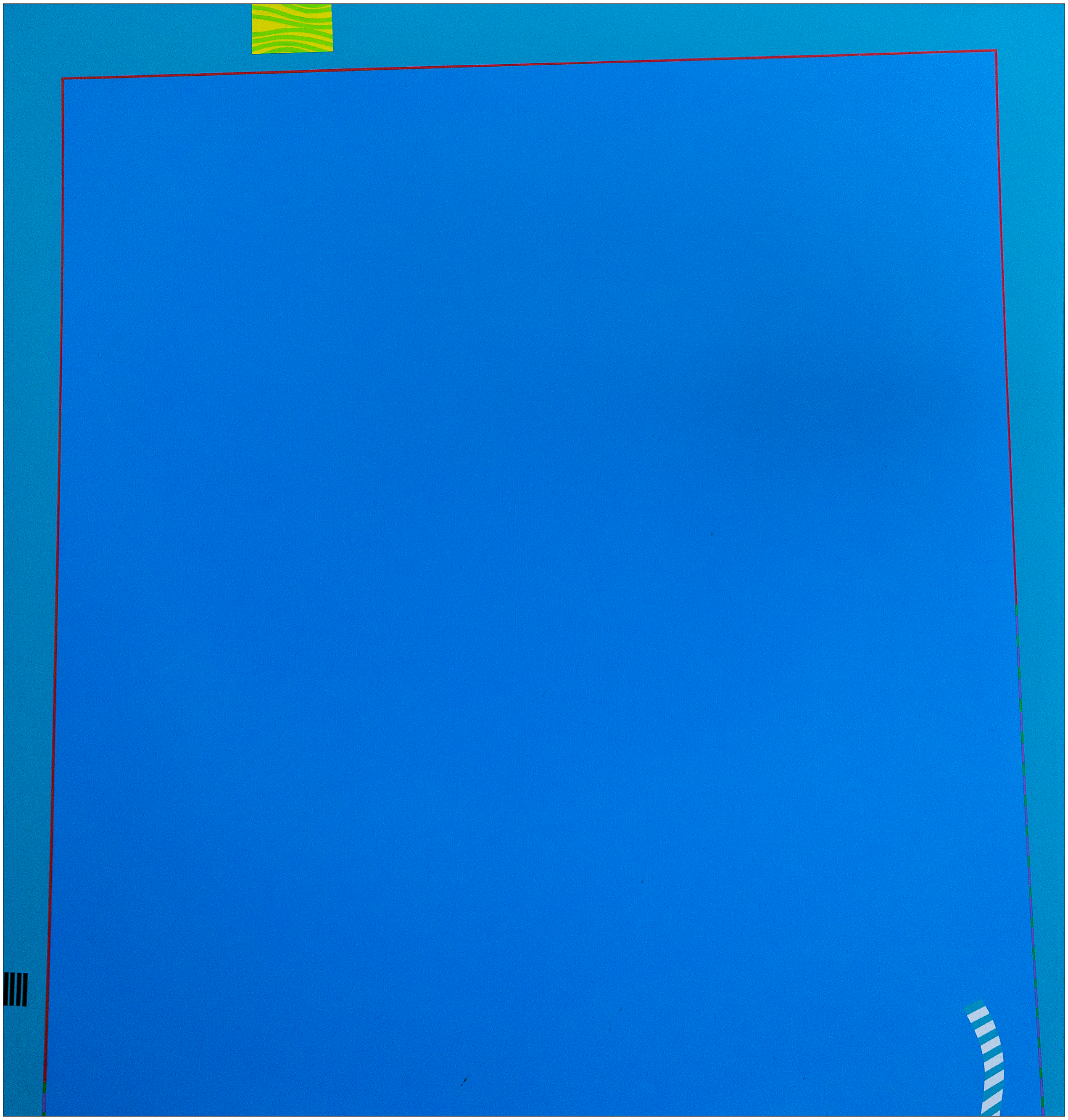
Green Line

1990. Acrylic on canvas, 41 x 42 in.
Collection of Jonathan and Maureen Hill.



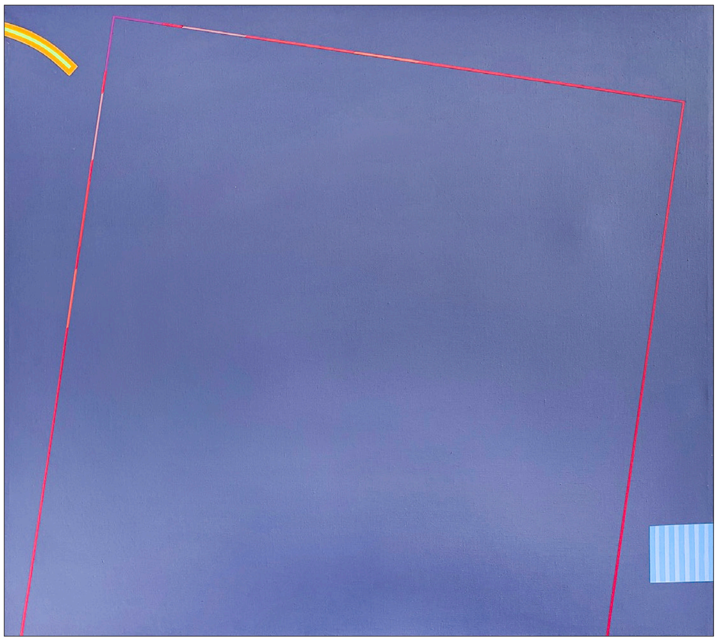
T

1990. Acrylic on canvas, 46 x 47 in.
Collection of David and Beverly Freeman.

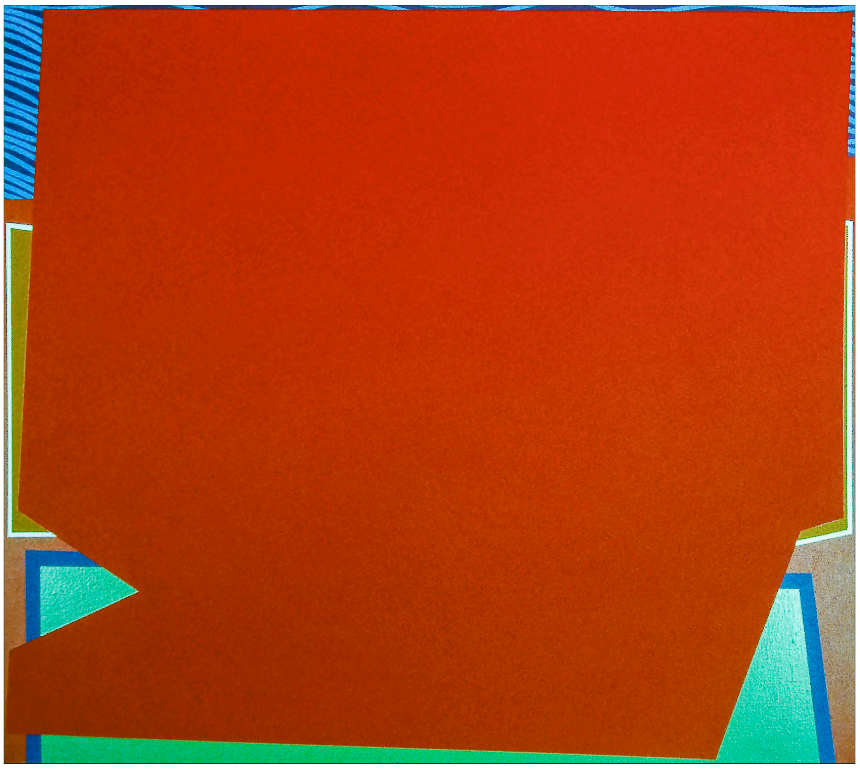


Untitled

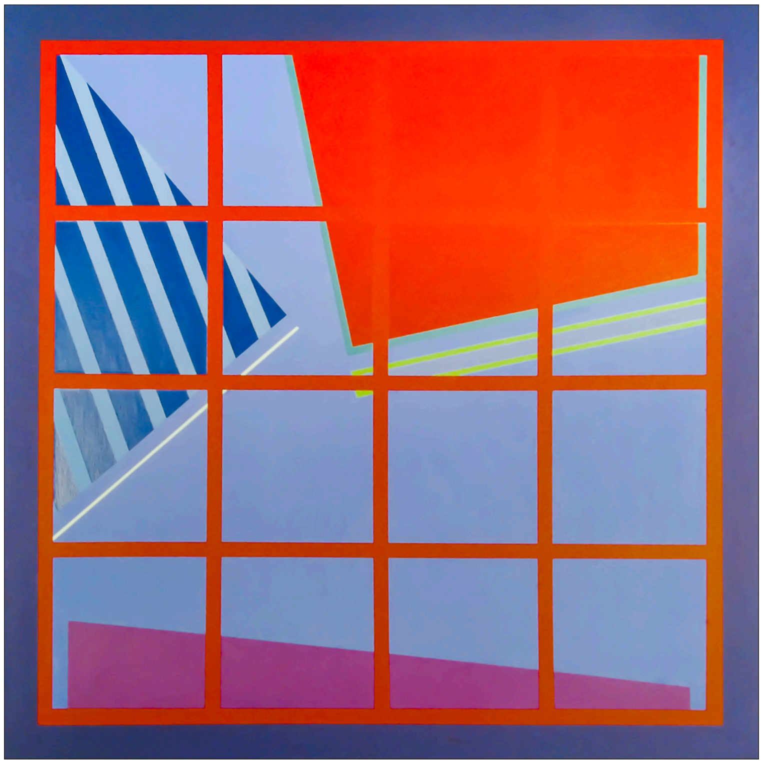
1991. Acrylic on canvas, 49.5 x 47.5 in.
Collection of Katy and Jon Welles.



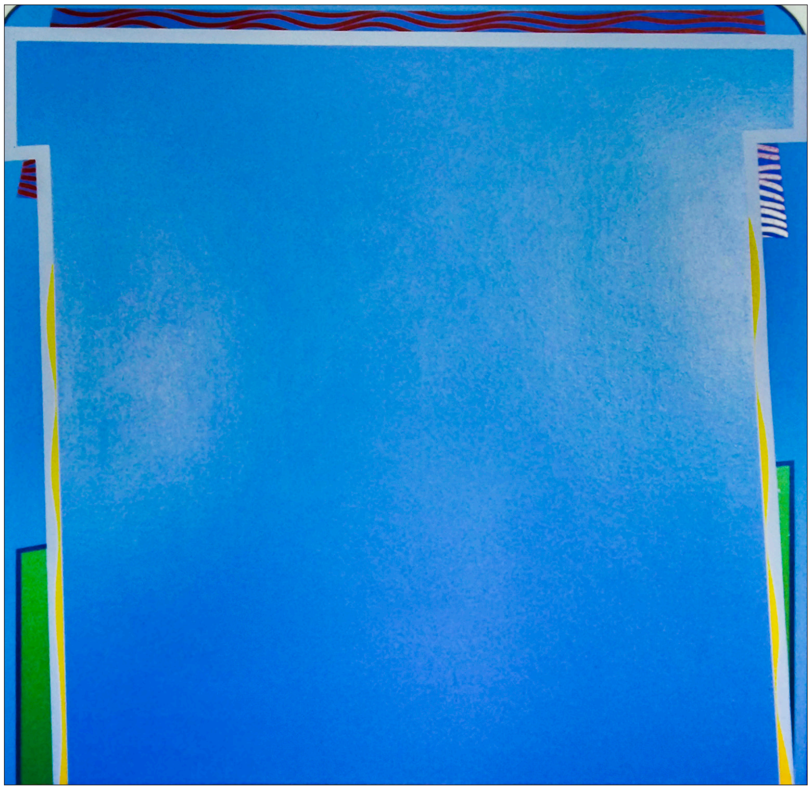
Red Line, 1990. Acrylic on canvas, 31 x 35 in. Collection of Patrick Rock.



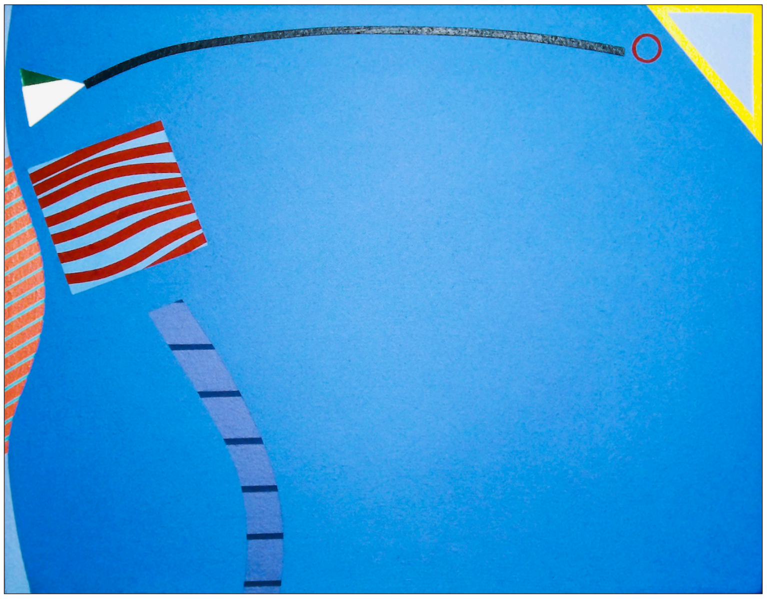
White Line, 1990. Acrylic, 37 x 42 in. Collection of John Haessler.



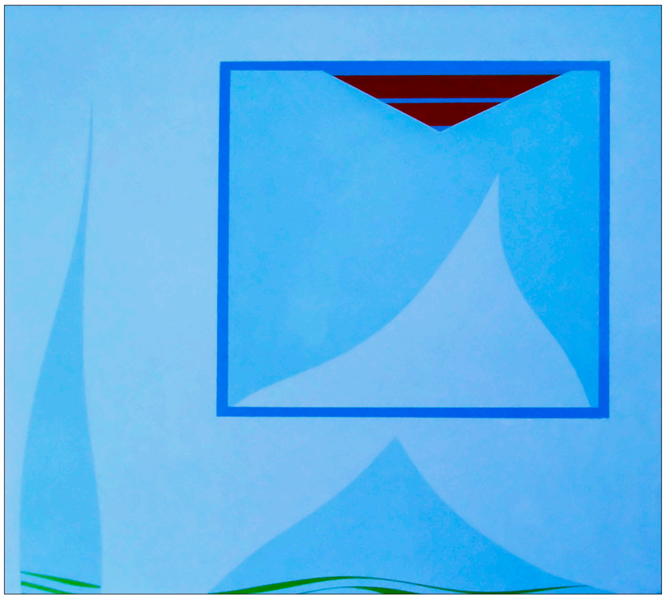
Window, 1990. Acrylic on canvas, 38 x 38 in.



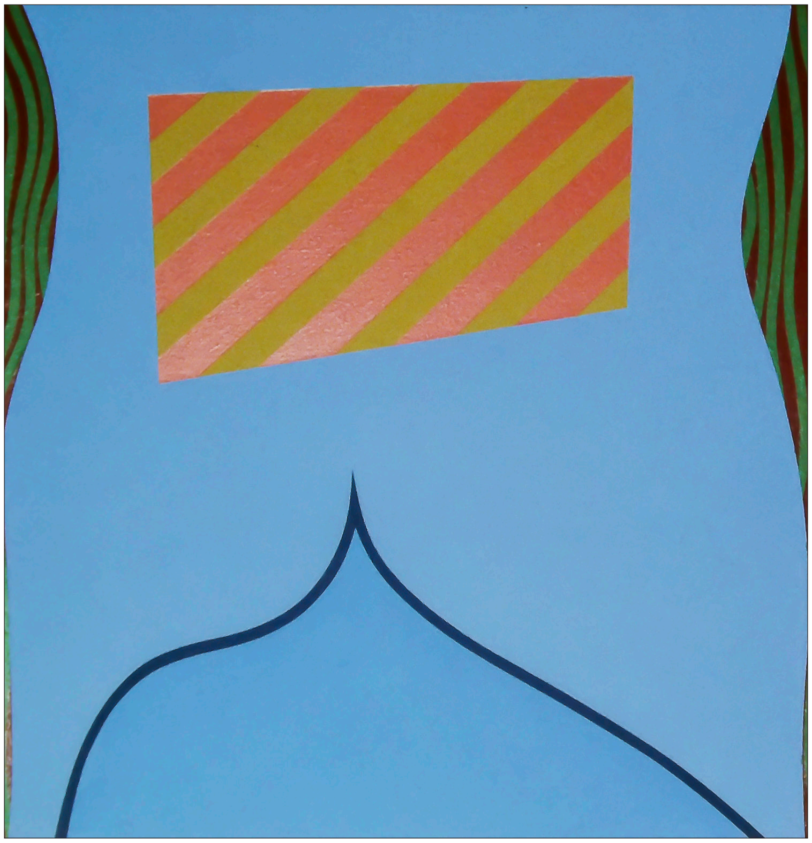
T-2, 1991. Acrylic on canvas.



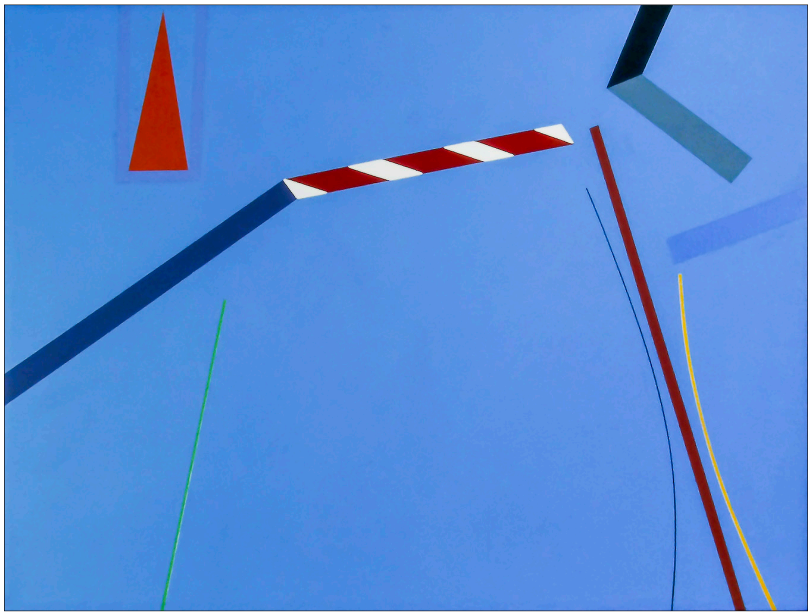
Red Circle, 1992. Acrylic on canvas, 14 x 18 in.



Untitled, 1991. Acrylic.

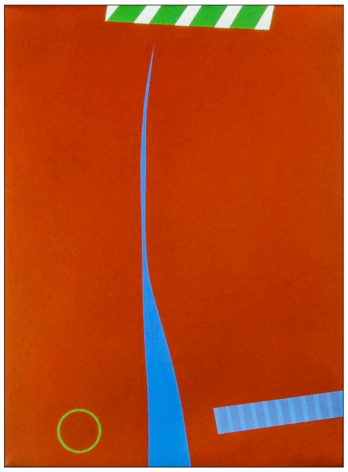


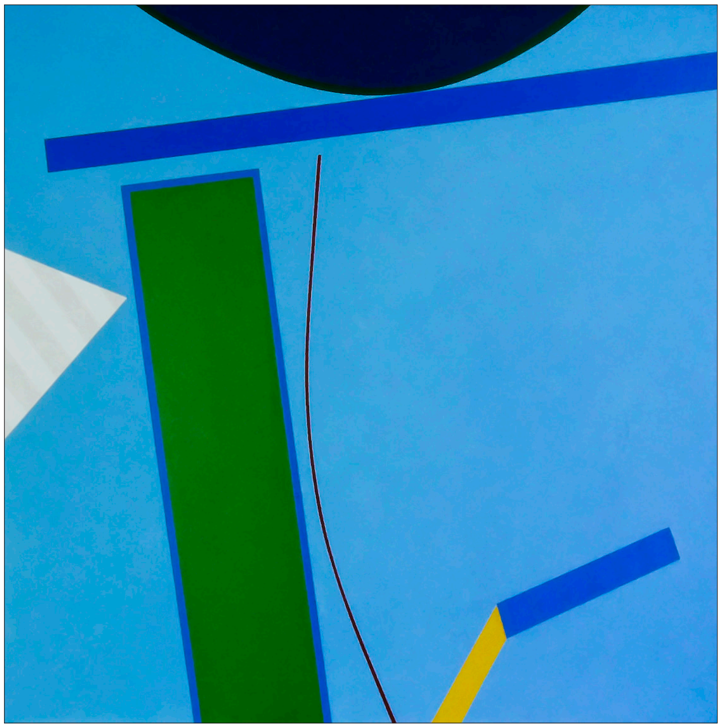
Virtue, 1991. Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 20 in.



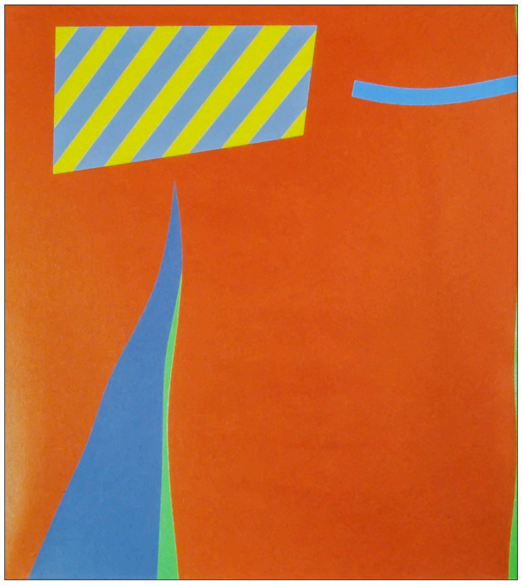
Warning, 1991. Acrylic on canvas, 15 x 20 in.

Agra, 1991.
Acrylic, 16 x 12 in.

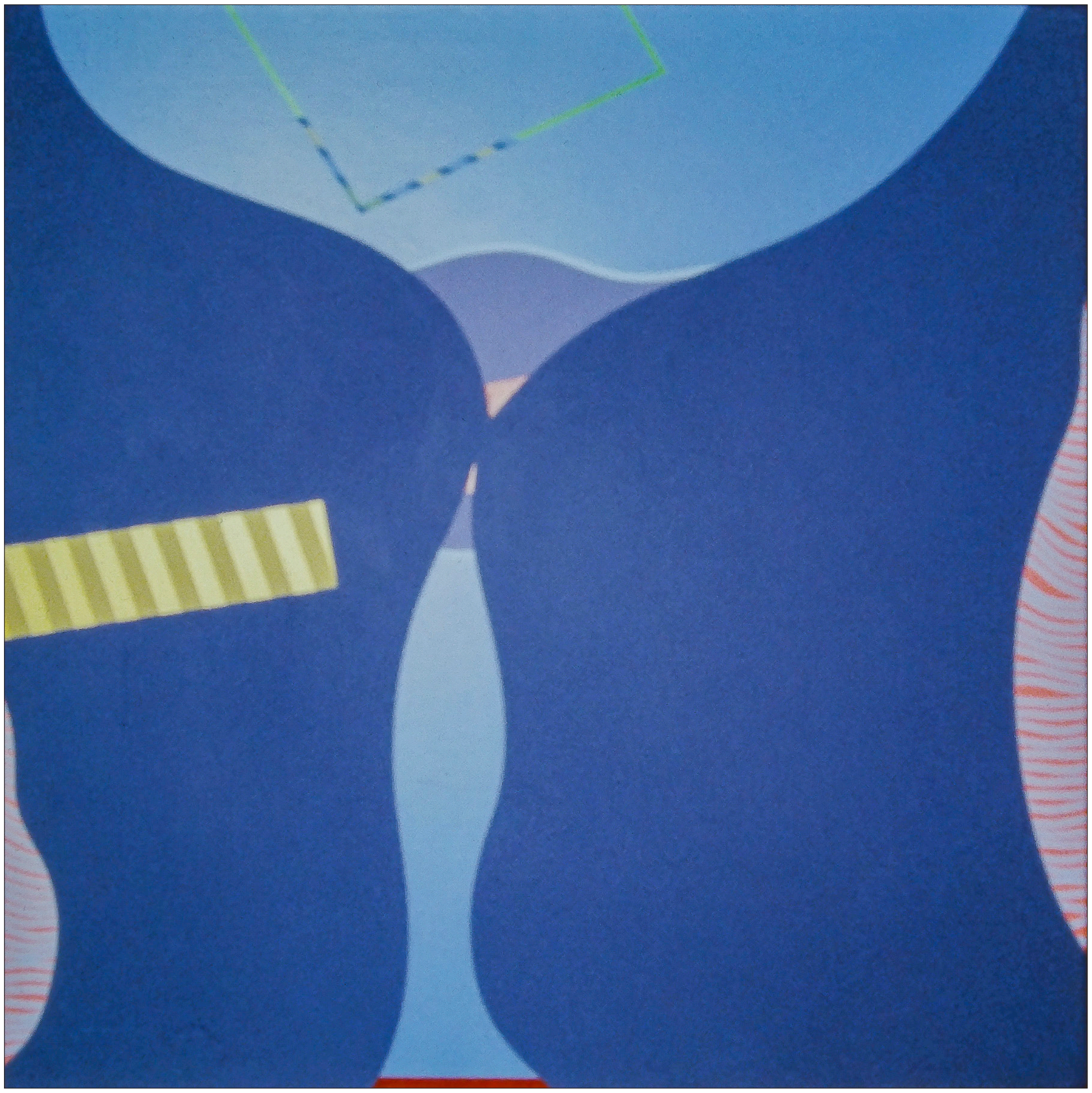




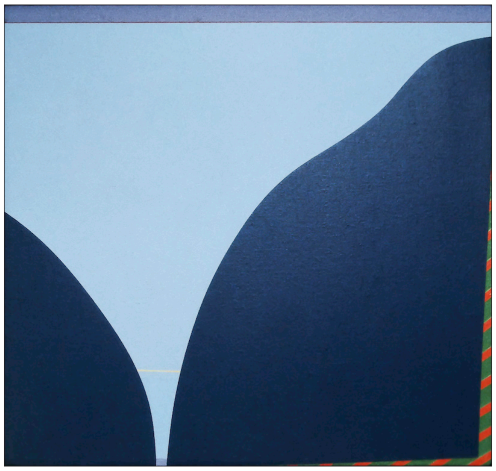
Barragan, 1991. Acrylic on canvas, 25 x 25 in.



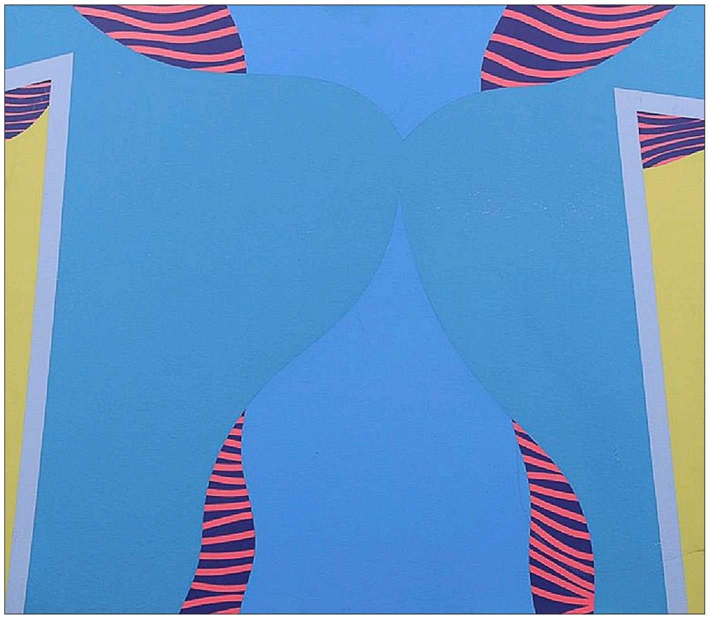
Tashkent, 1991.
Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 18 in.



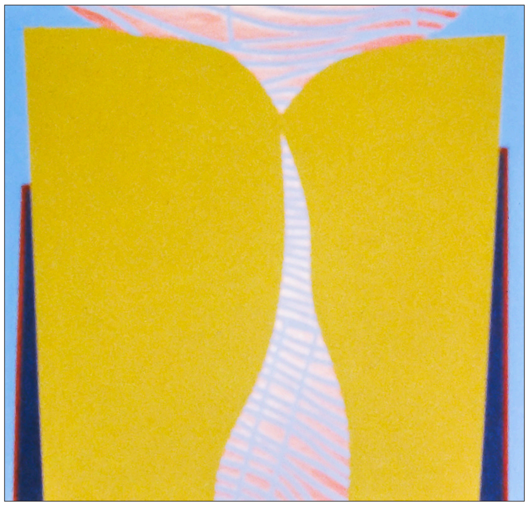
Sappho, 1992. Acrylic on canvas, 38 x 38 in.



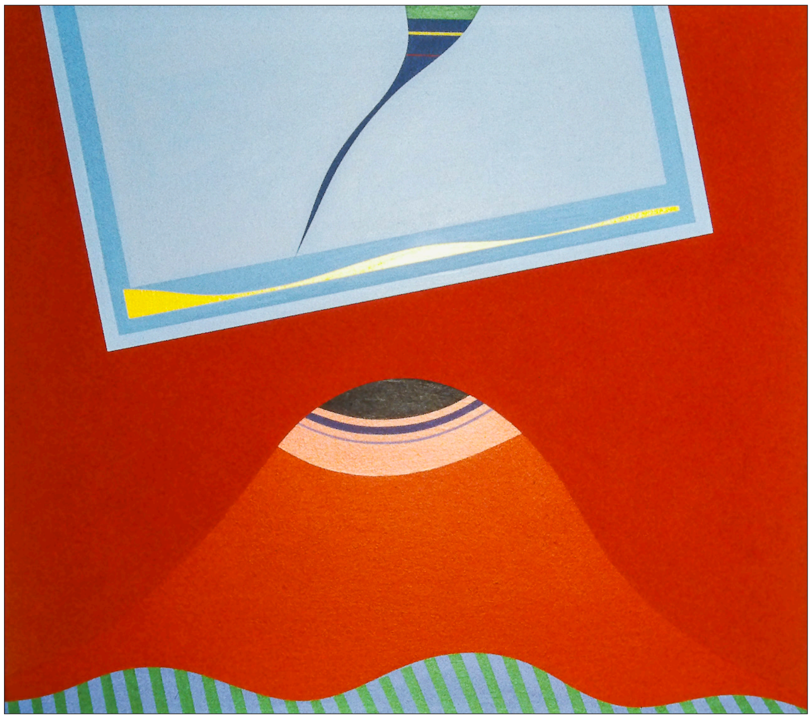
Haya-Ji, 1994. Acrylic, 16 x 18 in.
Collection of Patrick Rock.



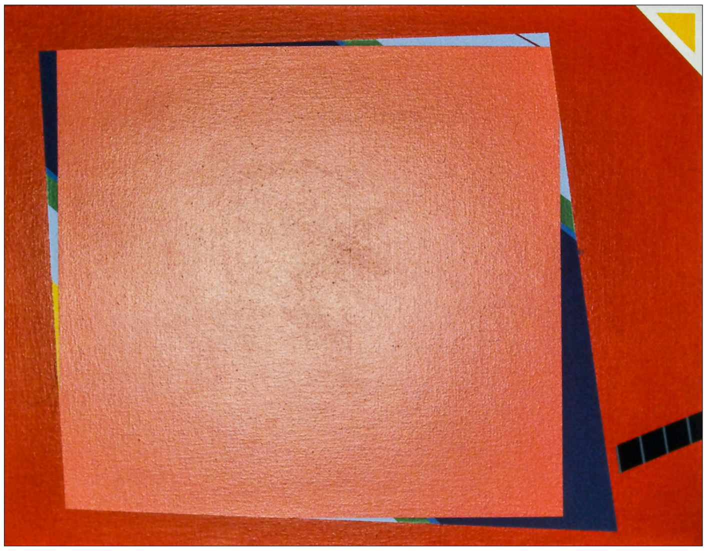
T-93, 1993. Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 27.5 in.



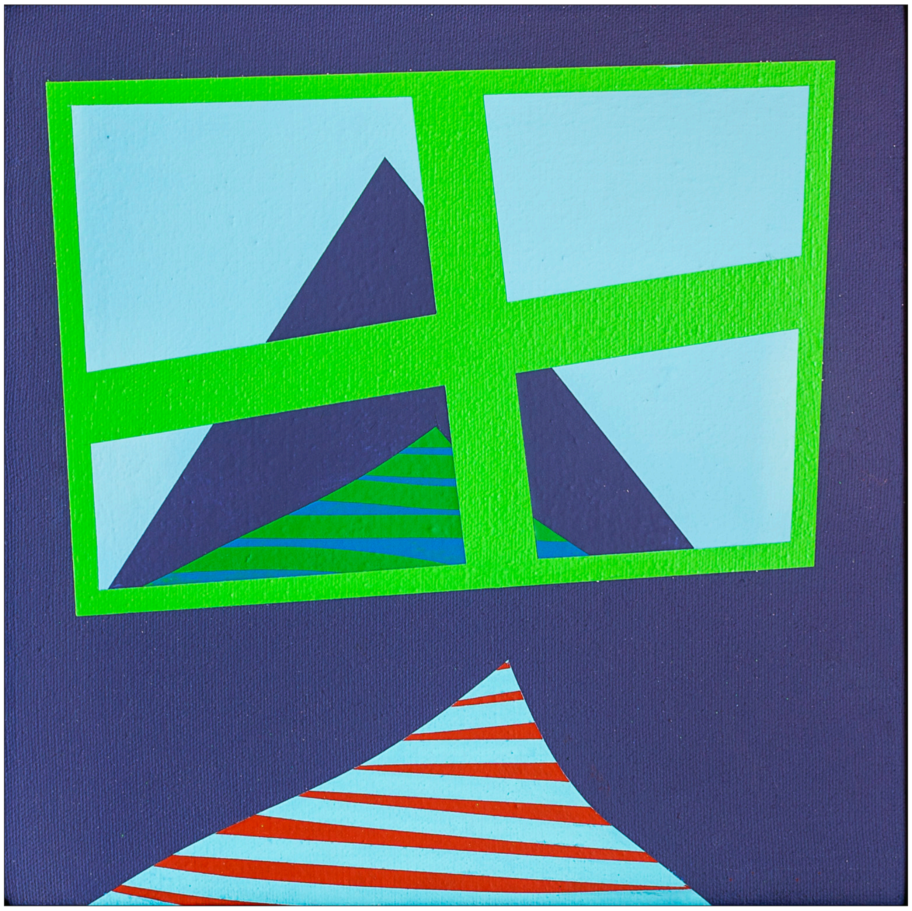
Book, 1993.
Acrylic on canvas, 18.5 x 20 in.



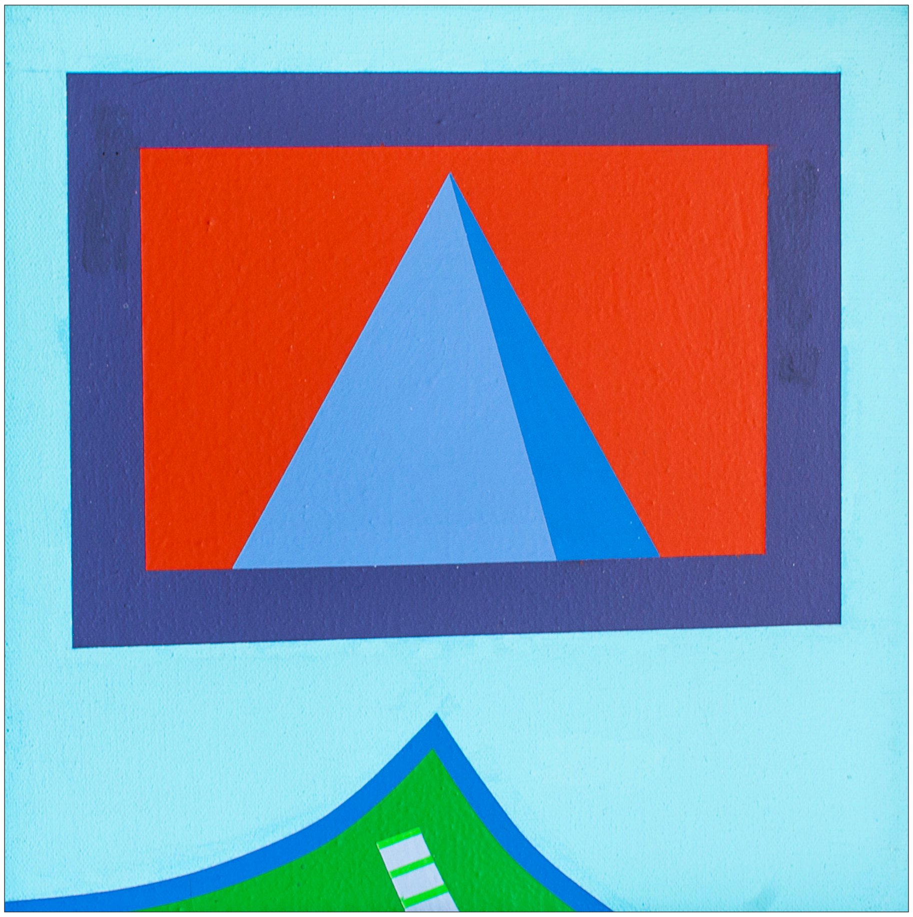
Benzaiten, 1994. Acrylic on canvas, 27 x 30 in.



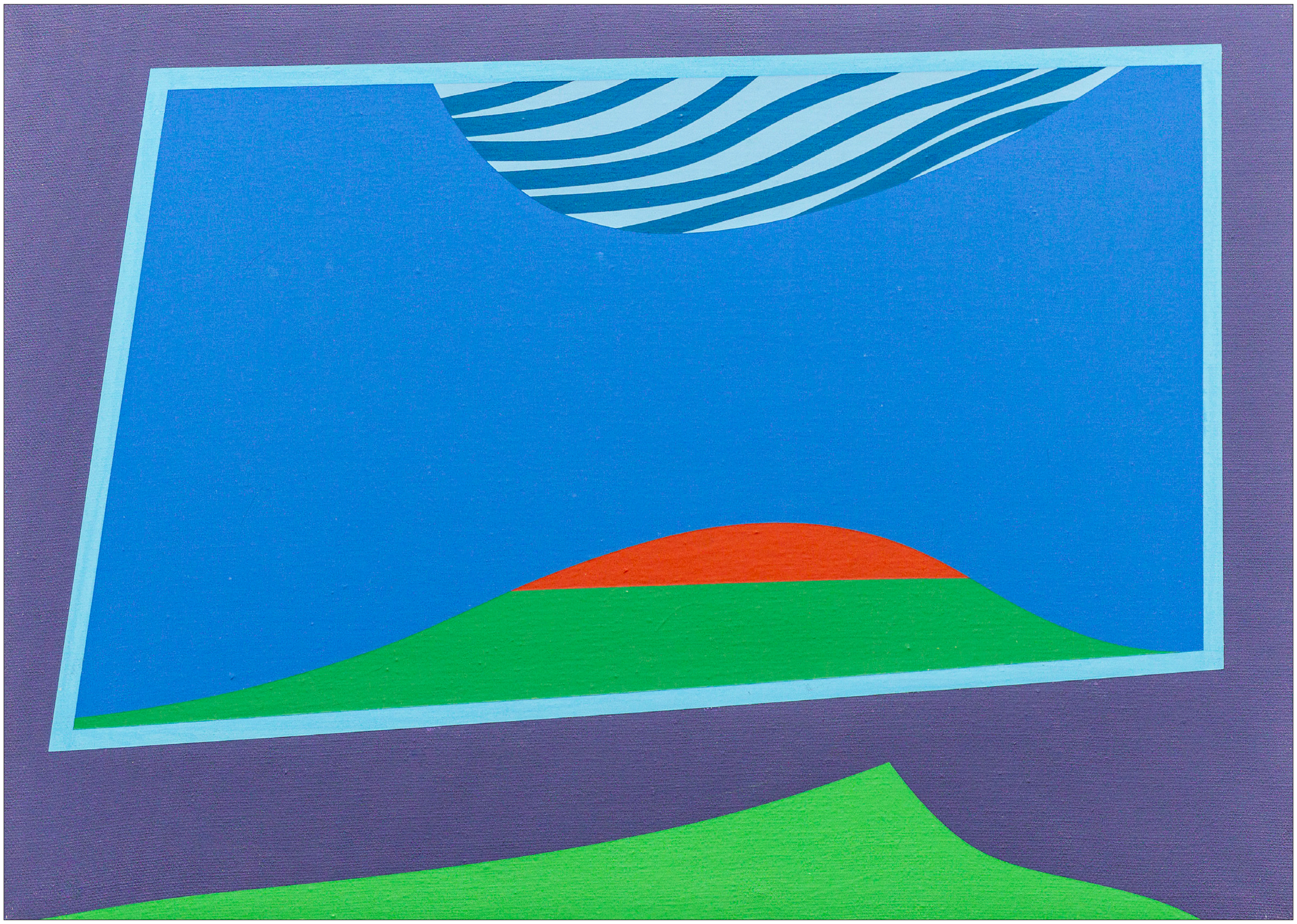
Untitled, 1994. Acrylic on canvas, 19 x 25 in.



Aratos of Sikyon, 1991.
Acrylic on canvas, 10 x 10 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman. Canada.

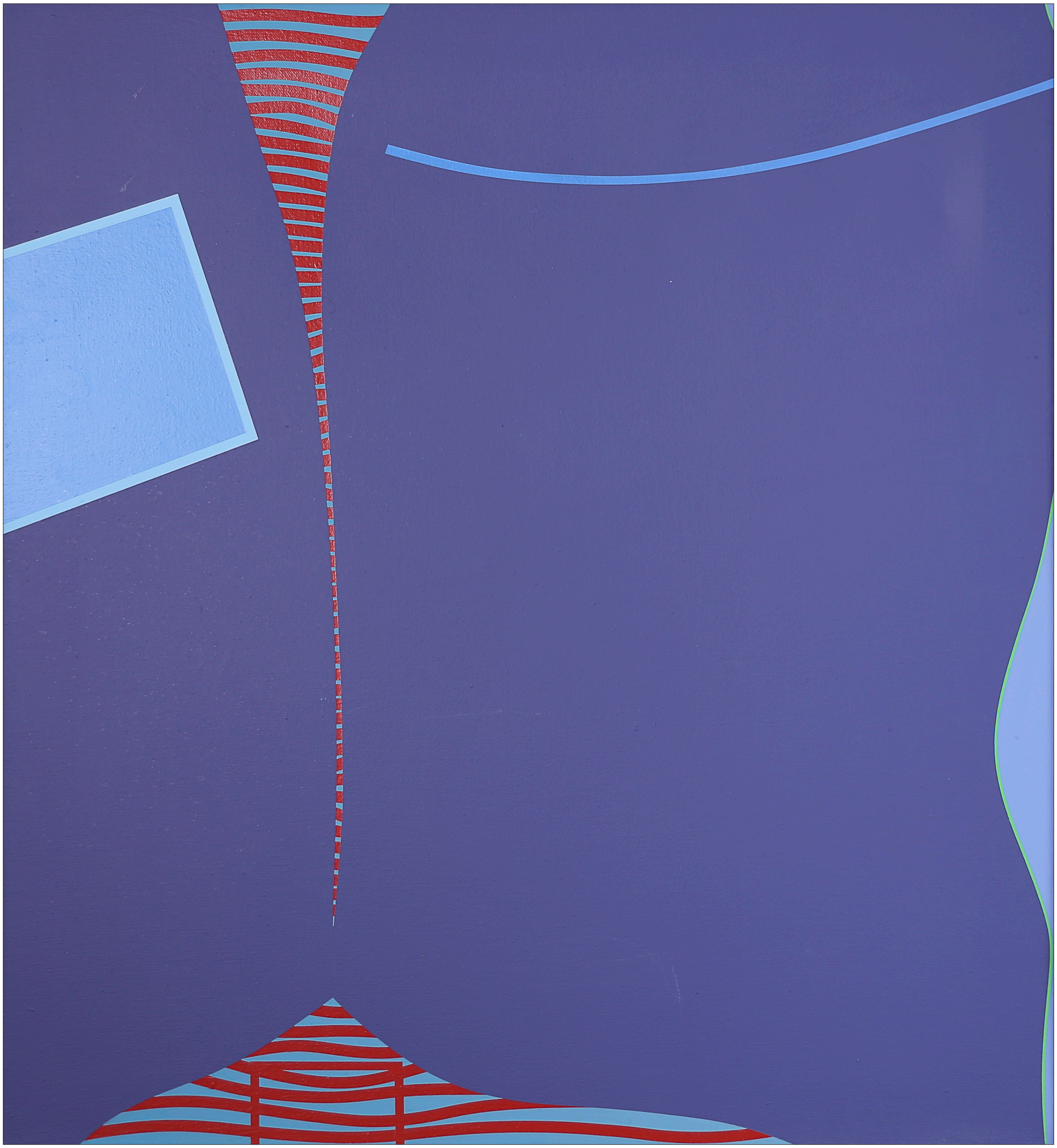


Life of Aratos, 1991.
Acrylic on canvas, 10 x 10 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman. Canada.



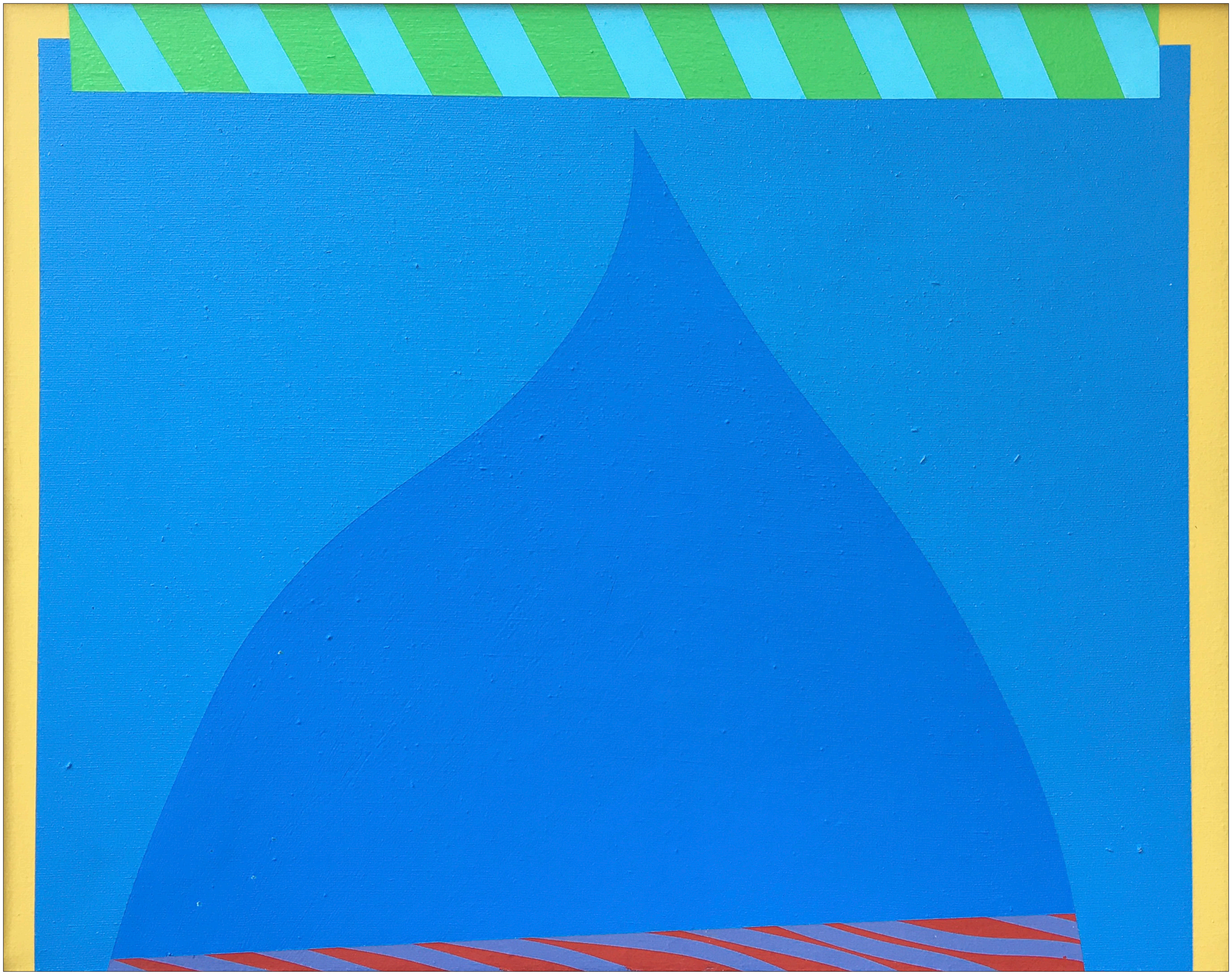
Steppes

1991. Acrylic on canvas, 12 x 16.5 in.
Collection of David and Tracy Wintroub.



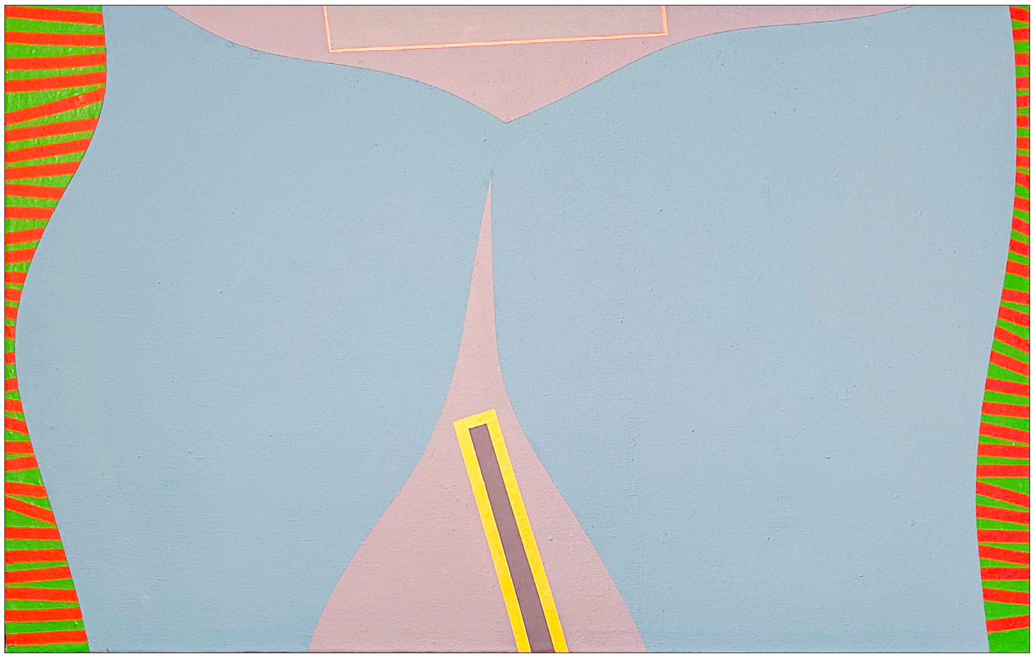
Samarkand

1991. Acrylic on canvas, 25 x 23 in.
Collection of George and Christine Greene.

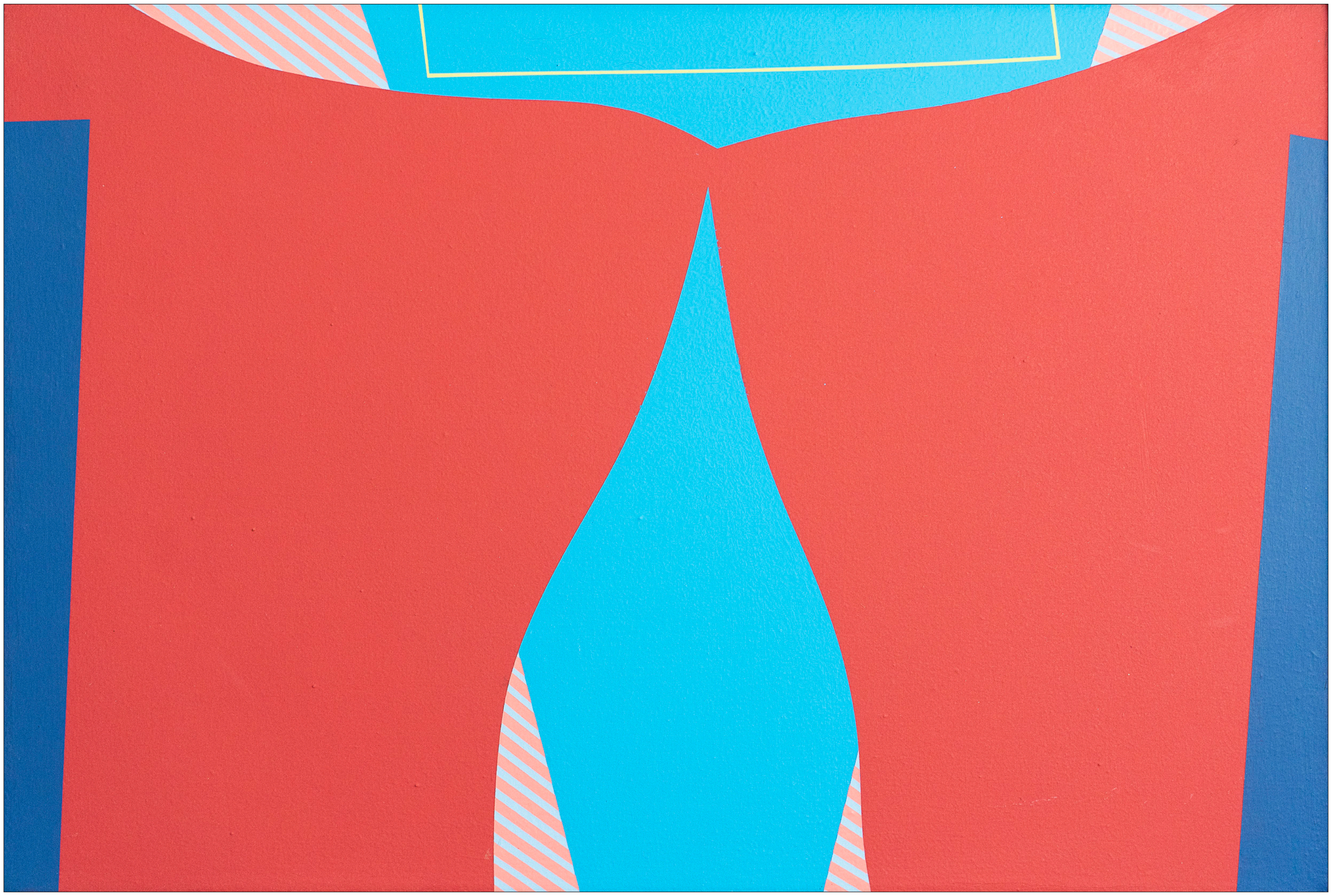


Untitled

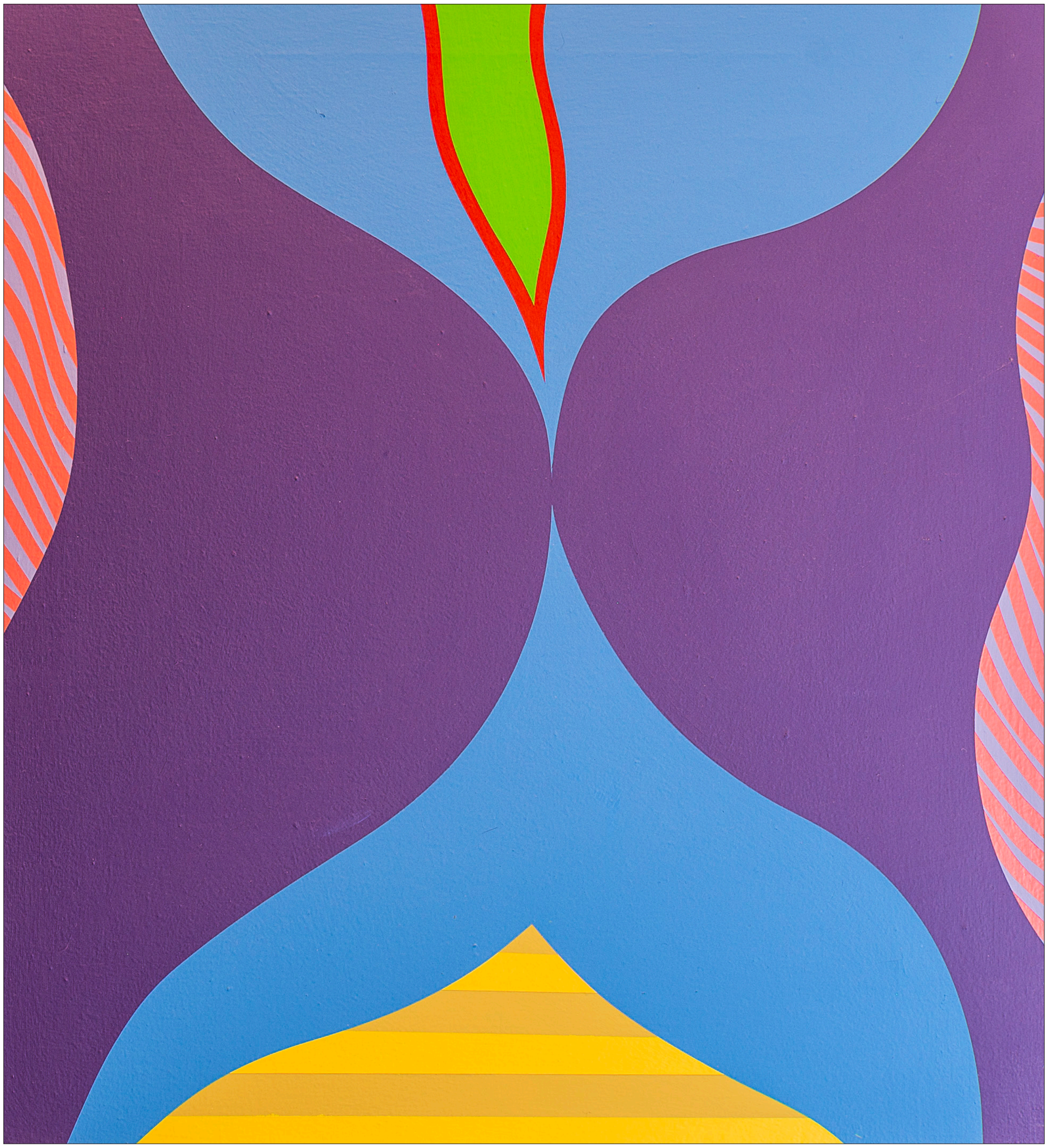
1991. Acrylic on canvas, 15 x 18.75 in.
Collection of Kelly (Siragusa) Adams.



Costume, 1993. Acrylic on canvas, 10 x 16 in. Collection of Michael Rock.

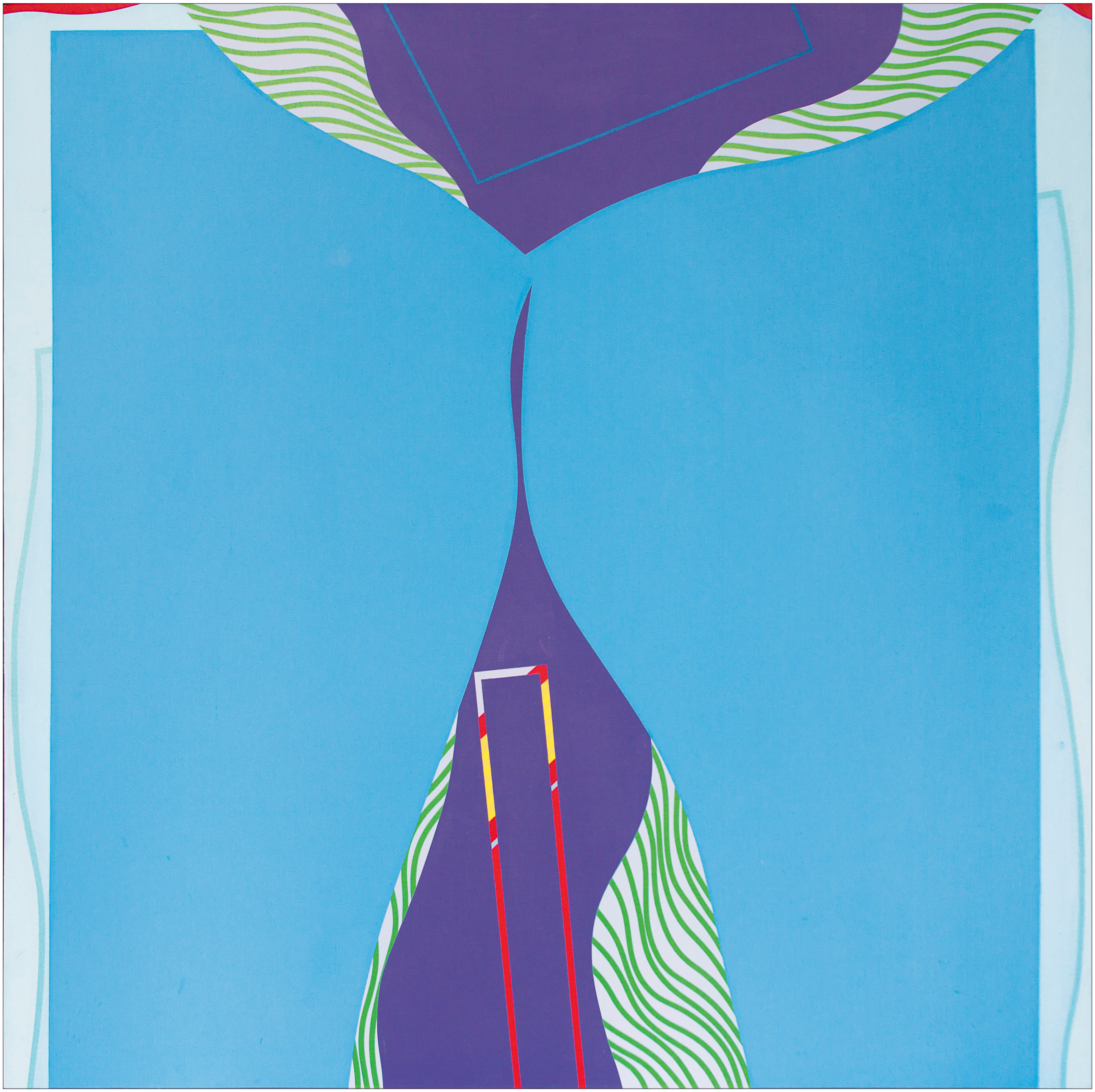


Garment, 1993. Acrylic on canvas, 16 x 24 in. Collection of Katy and Jon Welles.



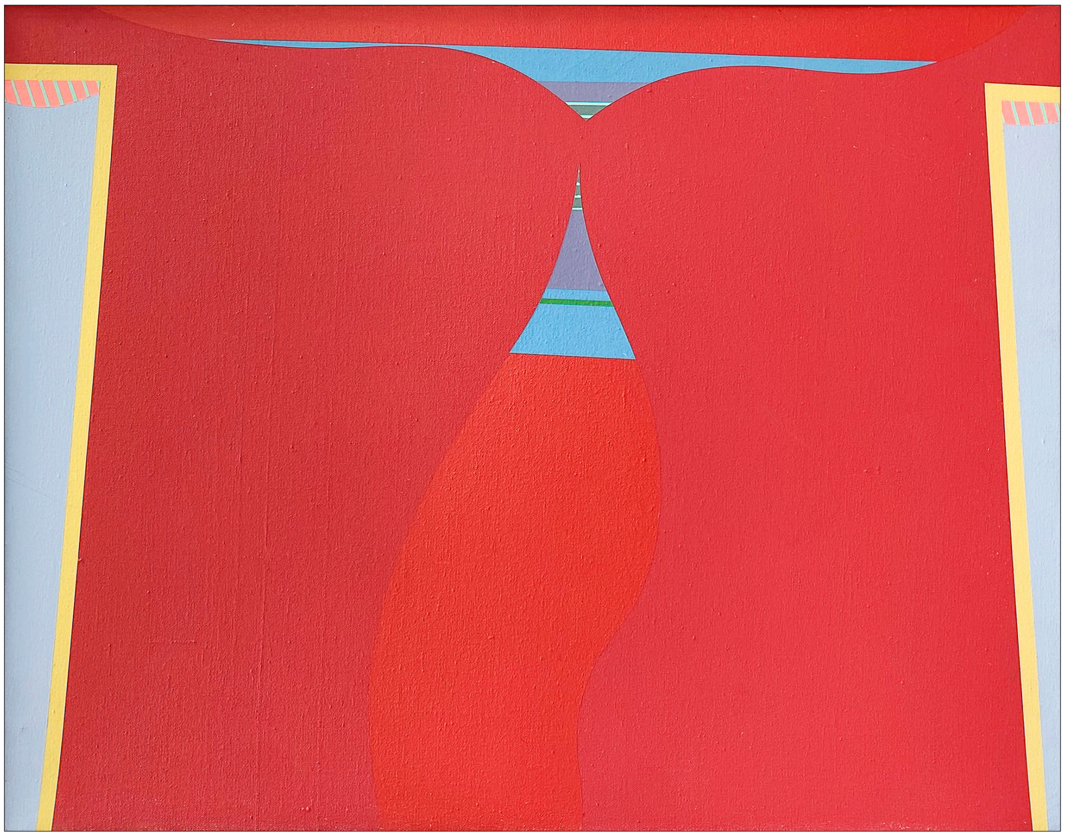
Untitled

1993. Acrylic on canvas, 20.5 x 18.5 in.
Collection of Dana and Scott Porter.

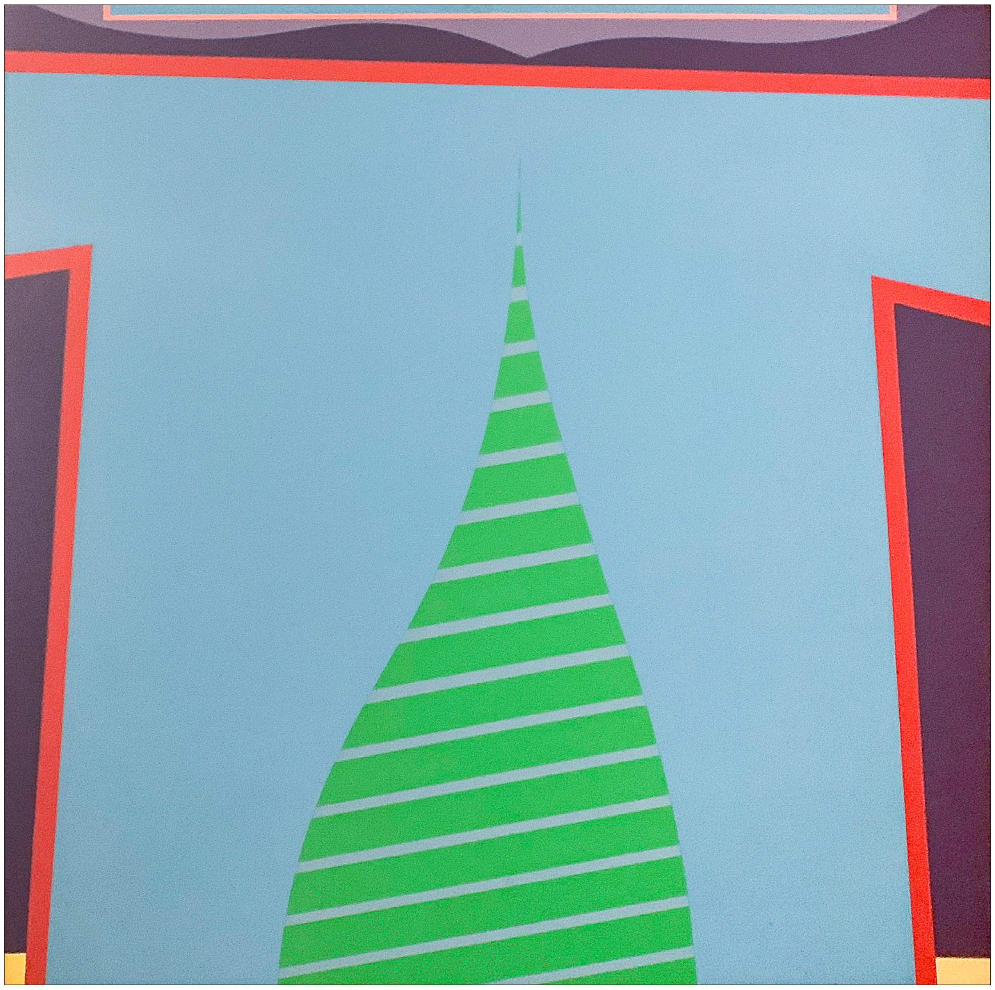


Suit

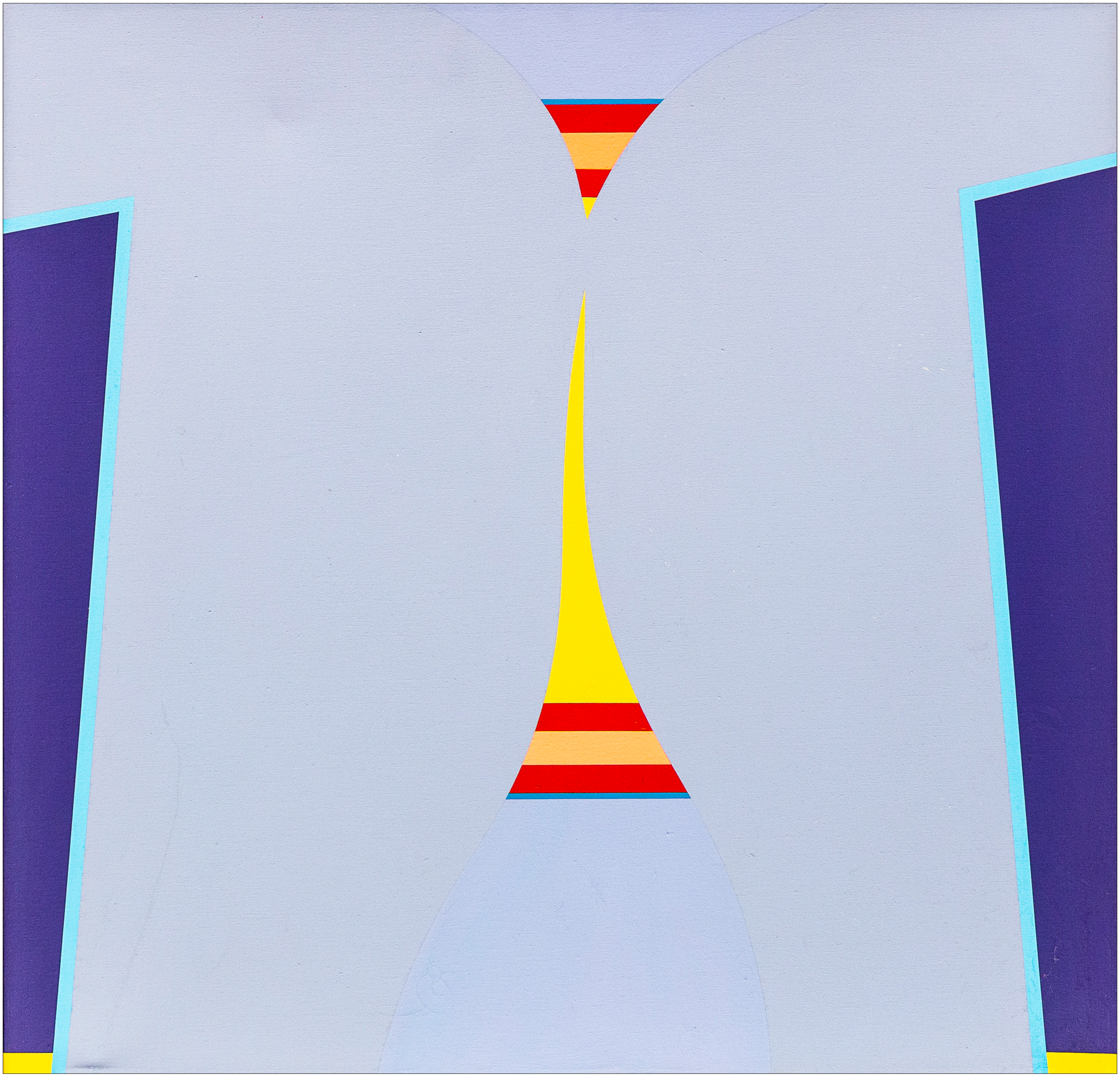
1993. Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48 in.
Collection of David and Beverly Freeman.



Red T, 1993. Acrylic on canvas, 20.25 x 26 in.
Collection of Robyn and Jeremy Bash.

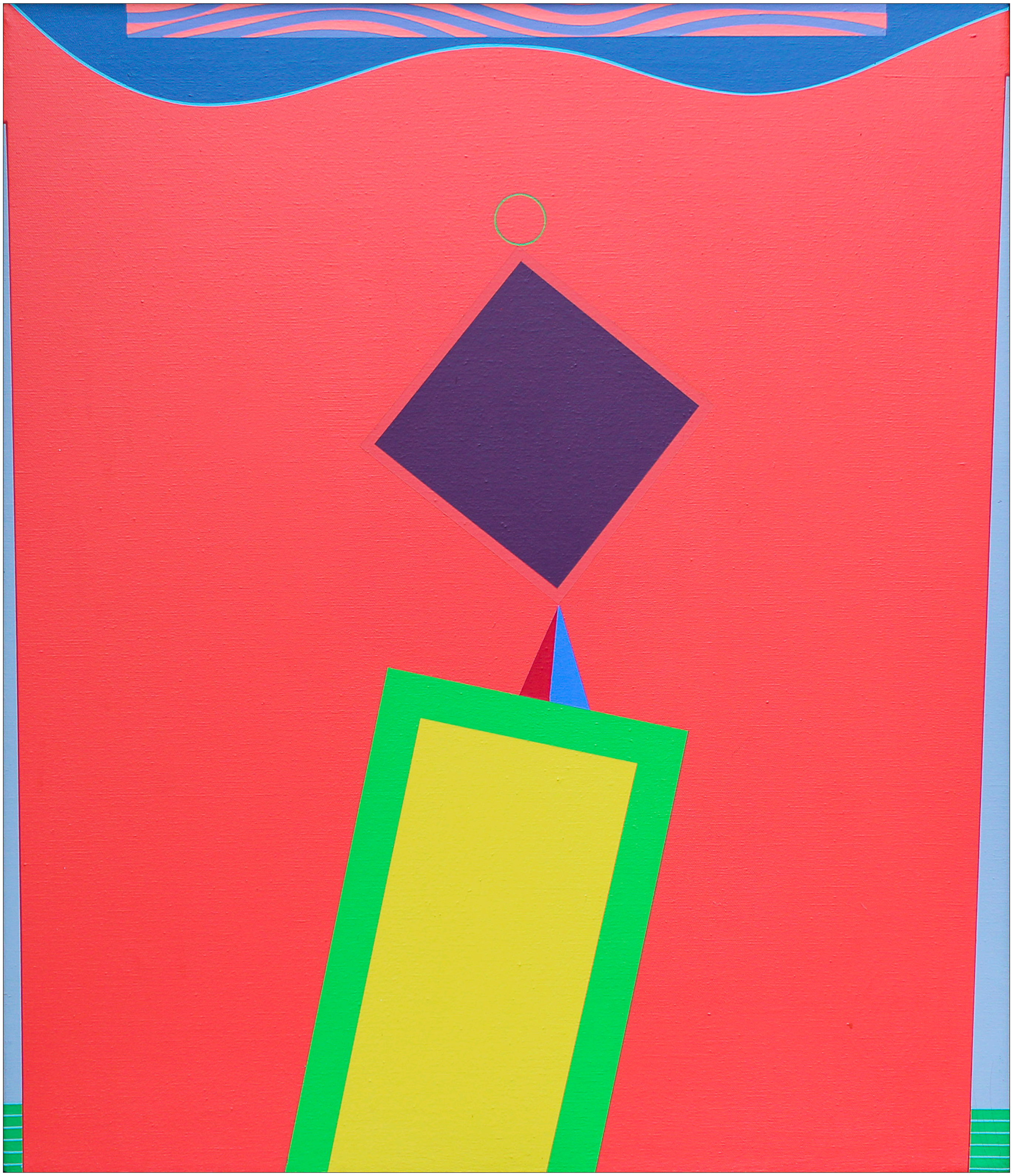


Red Outline T, 1994. Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 in.
Collection of Steve and Christy Hill.



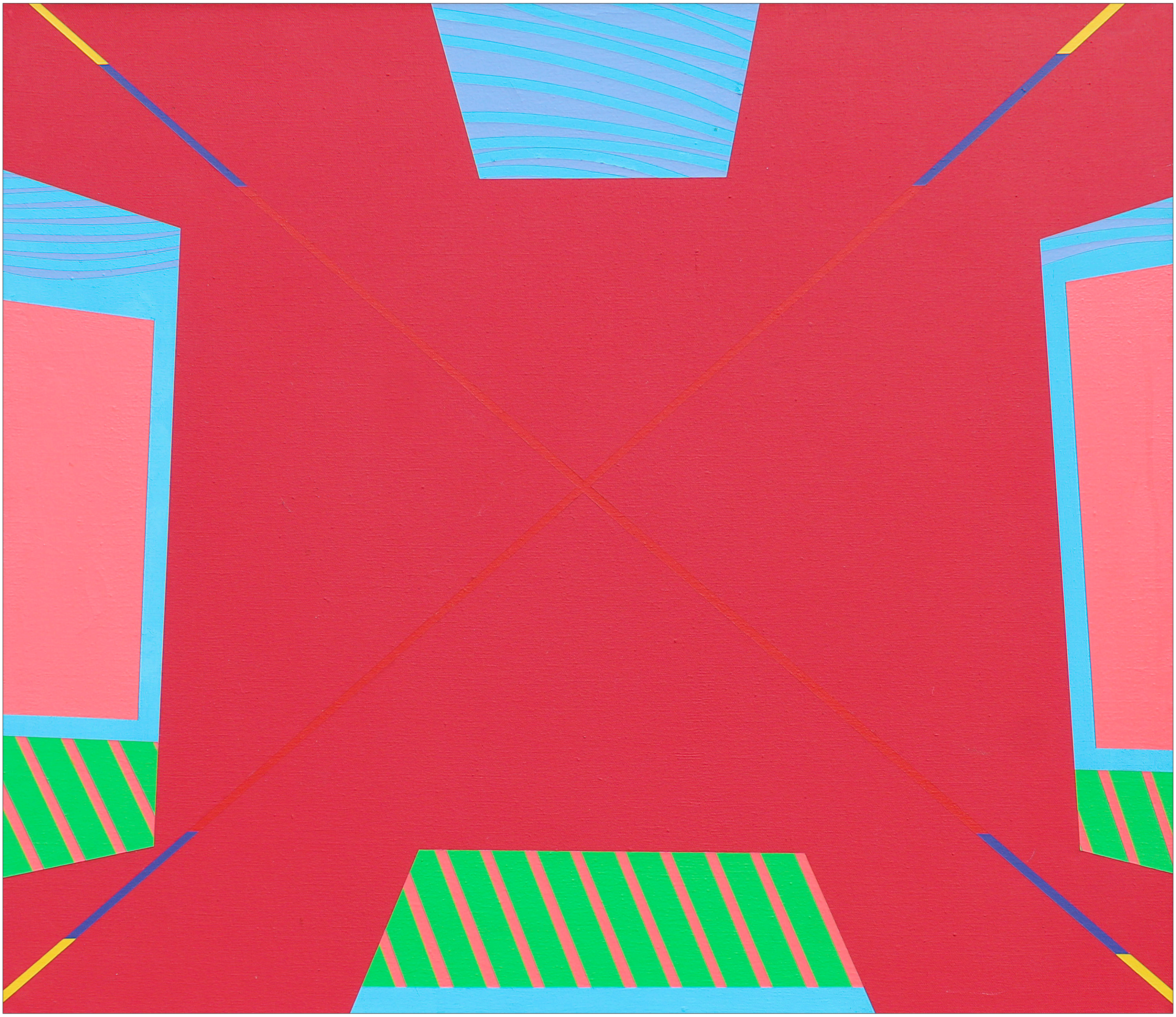
Violet T

1994. Acrylic on canvas, 29 x 30 in.
Collection of David and Tracy Wintroub.



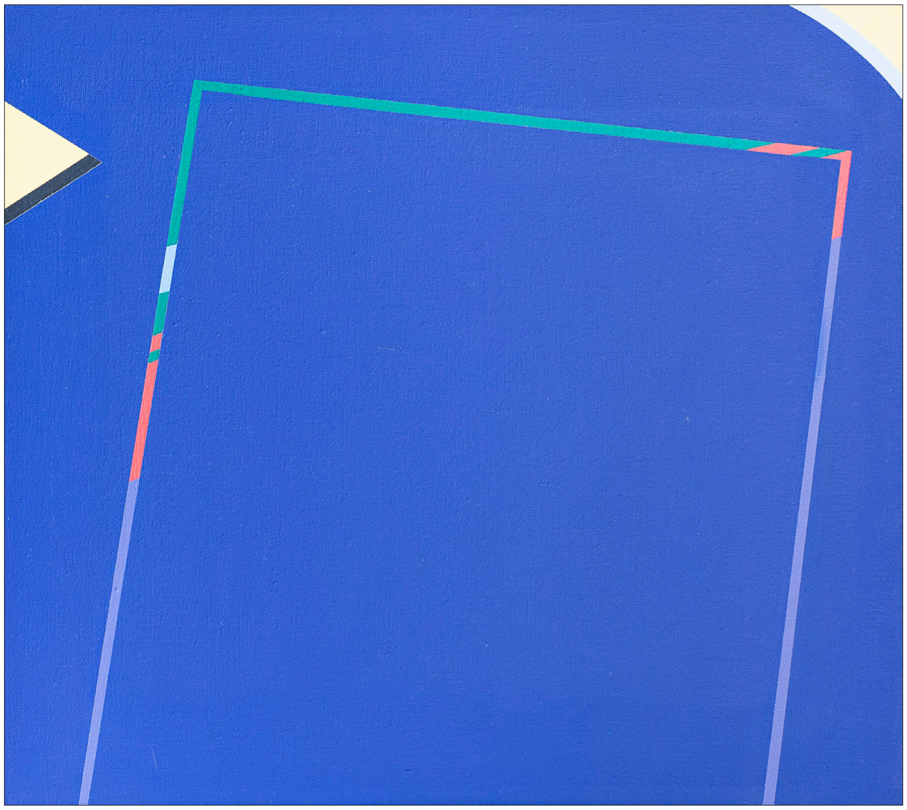
Untitled

1994–97. Acrylic on canvas, 29 x 24 in.
Collection of Jonathan and Maureen Hill.

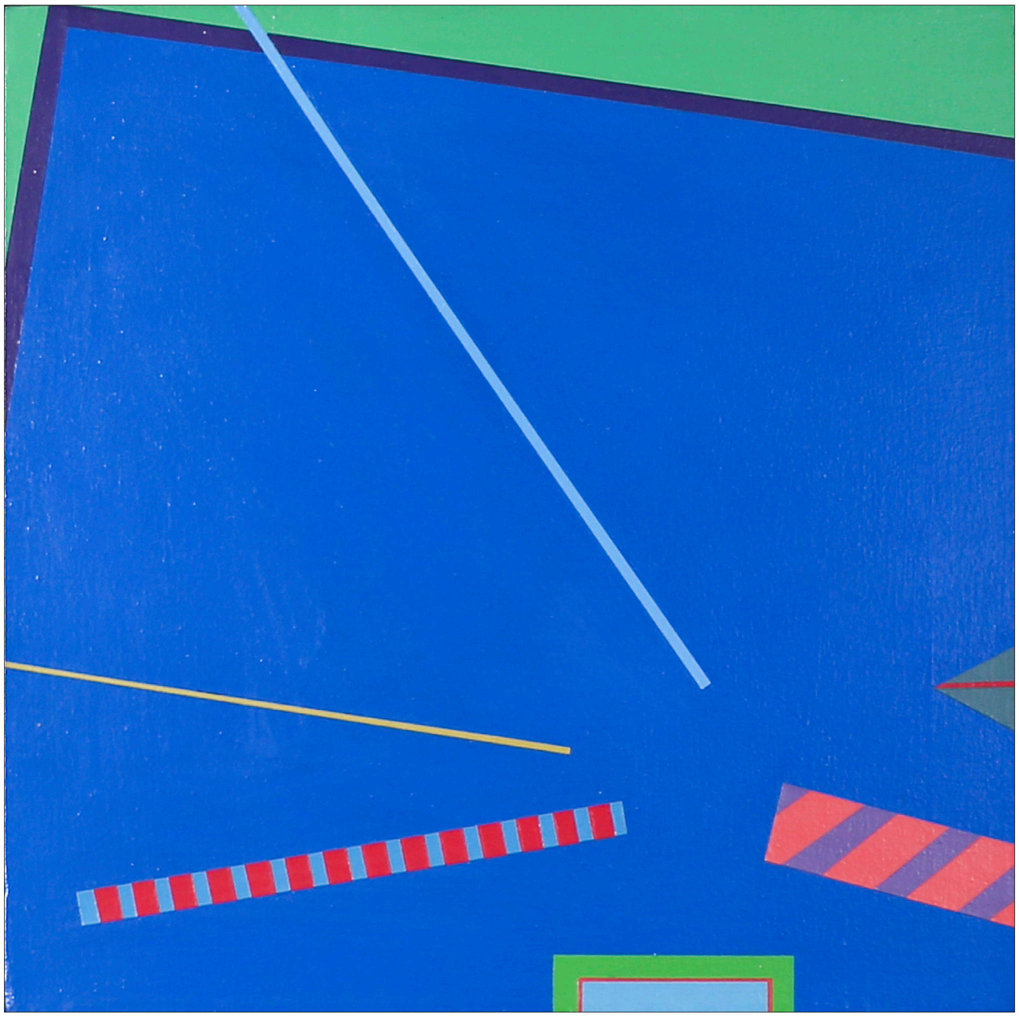


Dead On

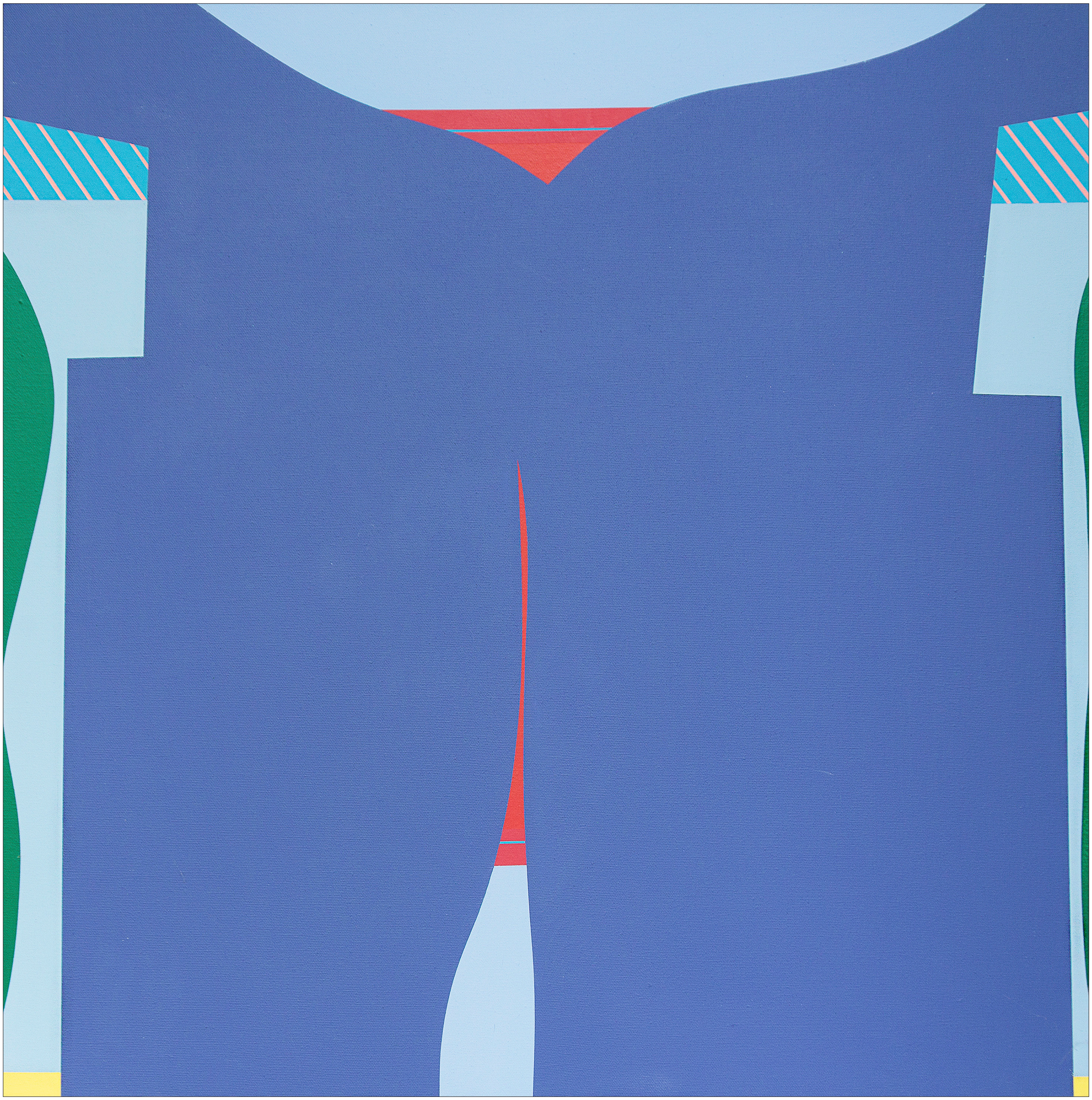
1994. Acrylic on canvas, 24.75 x 28 in.
Collection of Jonathan and Maureen Hill.



Rich Line, 1994. Acrylic on canvas, 14.5 x 16.25 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman. Canada.

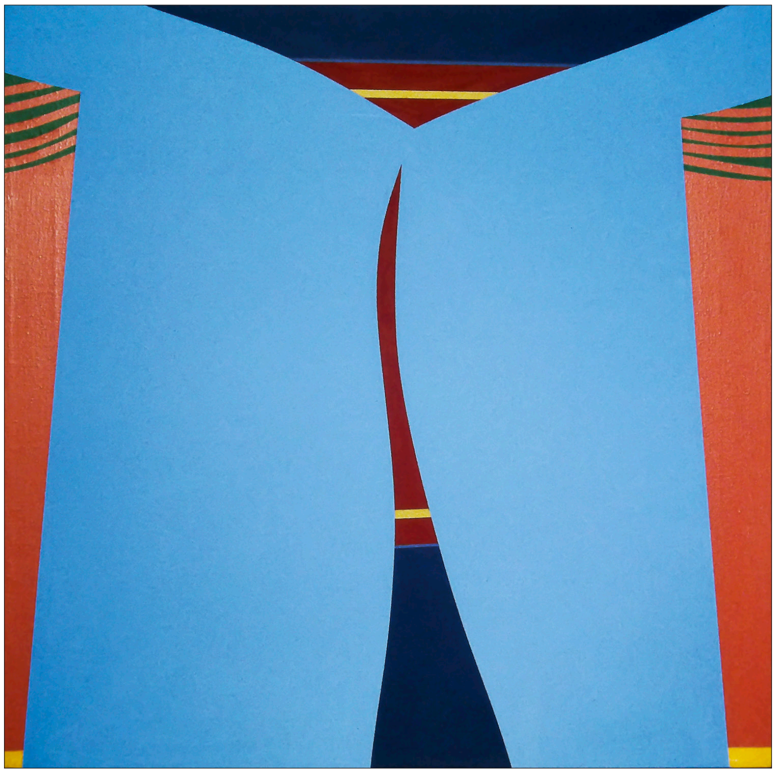


Untitled, 1994. Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 18 in.
Collection of Stephen and Leslie Hill.

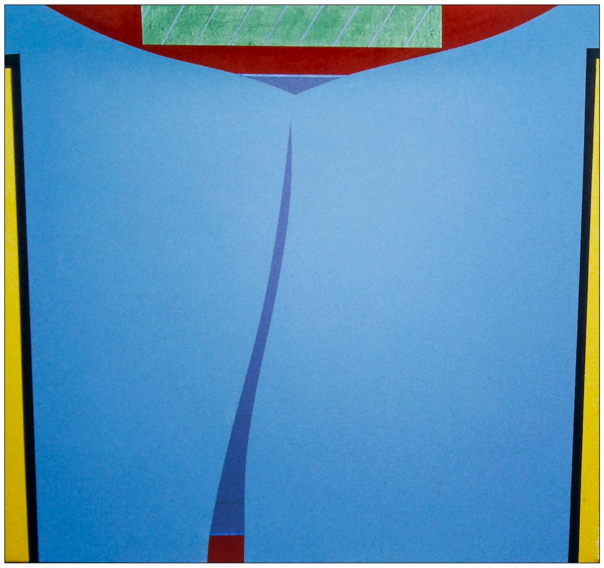


Catch I (Royal Coat)

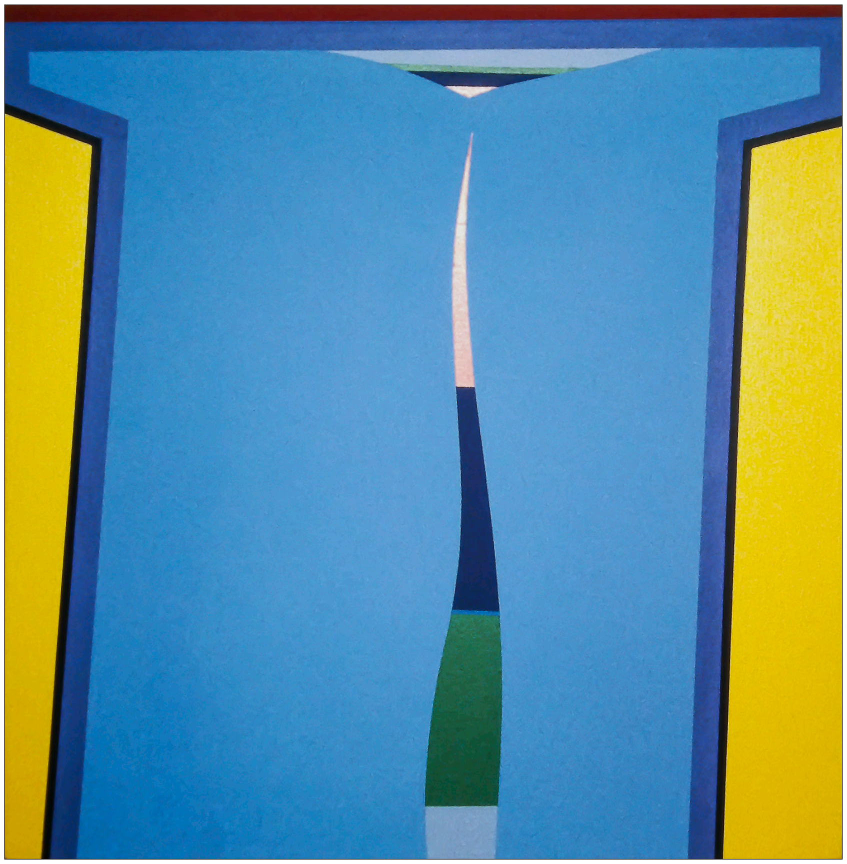
1994. Acrylic on canvas, 23.5 x 22.5 in.
Collection of David and Beverly Freeman.



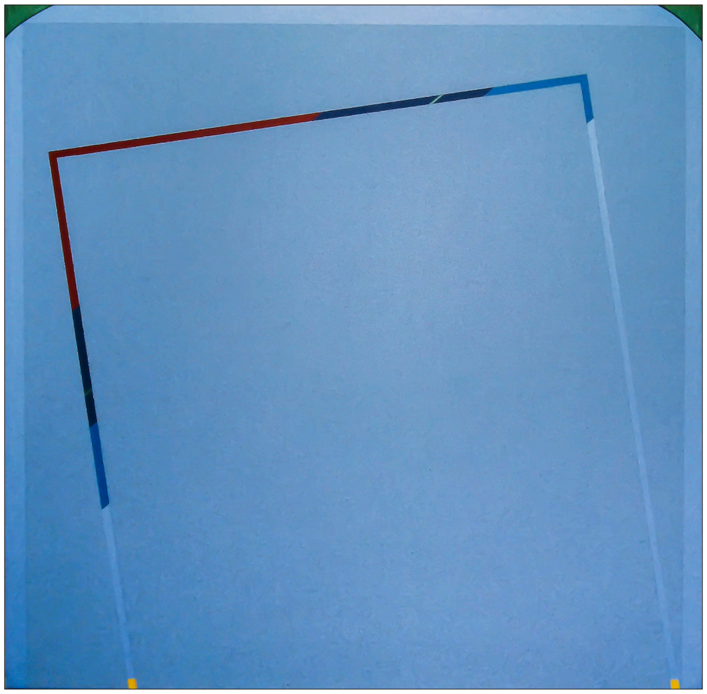
Catch II, 1994. Acrylic on canvas, 22 x 22 in.



Yellow T, 1994. Acrylic on canvas, 15 x 17 in.



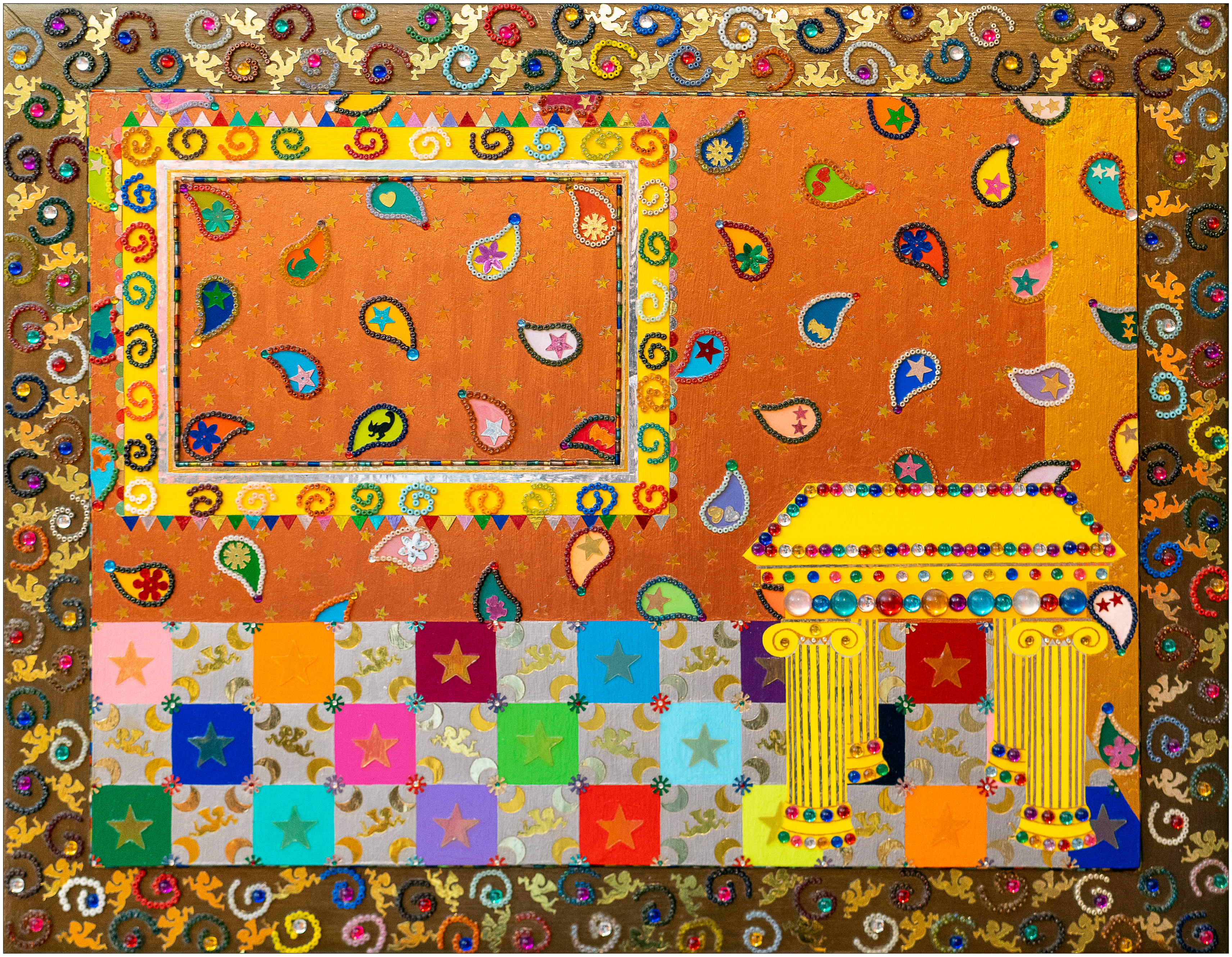
Catch III, 1994. Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 in.



Cut Corners, 1994. Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 20 in.

Remembrance by Kelly (Siragusa) Adams

Kelly Adams is a resident artist at the Hot Shops Art Center in Omaha, Nebraska.



Kelly (Siragusa) Adams. Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.

What I remember about Peter was his willingness to spend time with everyone in the room. His one-on-one weekly critiques were both intimidating and enlightening. He would ask about my family and what classes I was taking. Peter genuinely expressed interest in getting to know me and being honest about my work.

I learned so much from him about art, but what stood out was his love for his children. Peter told so many stories about what his children were doing and where they went to school. He was so proud of them and very much loved being in their company. Peter's love and devotion to Jody was his greatest accomplishment. I am so glad I could witness that.

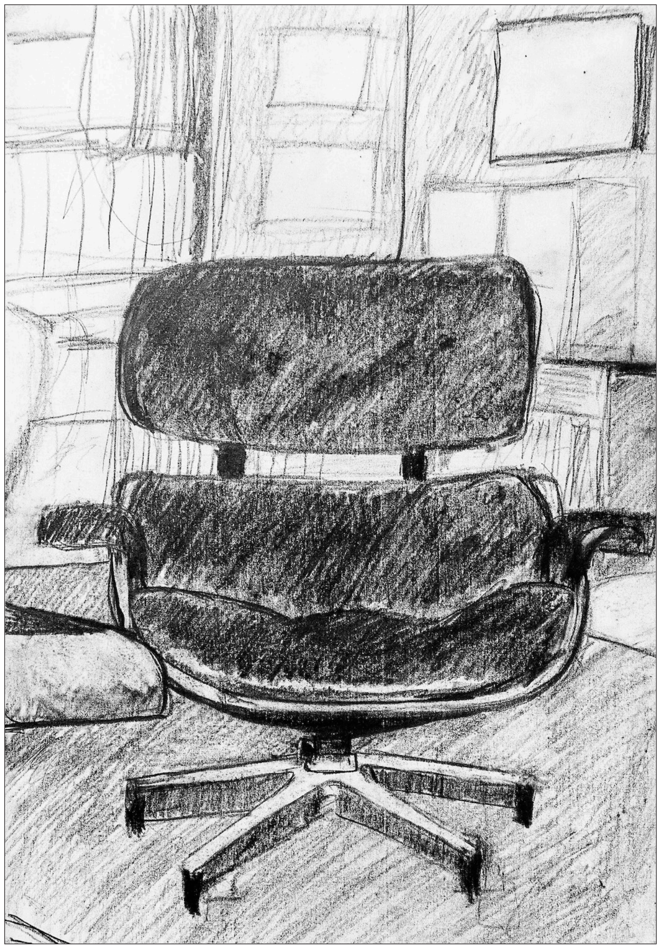
—Kelly (Siragusa) Adams

Stepping Back from Teaching: 1995 to 1999

I ended the last introduction (page 396) stating that my father semi-retired in 1993. He taught only in the spring; his autumns were free. I also noted that this change released my dad to pursue other interests, and that he knew not to waste time.

But I was left with a mystery: What did he do during those months he wasn't teaching but wasn't in Canada? I didn't know. So I asked my mother. Apparently Dad's routine was something like this:

- Wake up around 7. Eat cereal. He favored Wheat Chex for whatever terrible reason.
- Turn on music—normally pre-1800 stuff. Think Bach, Vivaldi, Telemann, Handel, Haydn, Mozart. Light, orderly, energetic . . . nothing bombastic.
- The music couldn't be bombastic, as that would distract from reading *The Wall Street Journal*.
- He might also peruse a history or art-history book. (By this time he'd stopped taking the art journals.) He wasn't much for fiction. All these he would read in one of his beloved Eames chairs.



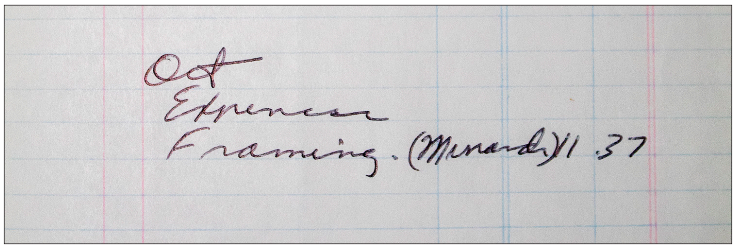
- Then he'd paint, or work on a car he was building (a reconstruction of a 1936 Mercedes Baron), or run errands, or paint some more.

James and Hyla Hill in the 1936 Mercedes Baron

- He watched a little more television than before, but not a lot. He wasn't an actively social guy, but on occasion he'd see a friend. And still he painted.

That was semi-retirement. In the spring he threw himself back into teaching drawing and painting. You'll see later that he still had plenty of students to work with.

He kept painting, but private sales tapered off. Unless there's an entire ledger I'm missing—maybe he went entirely digital?—the last entry he made was for October 1994.



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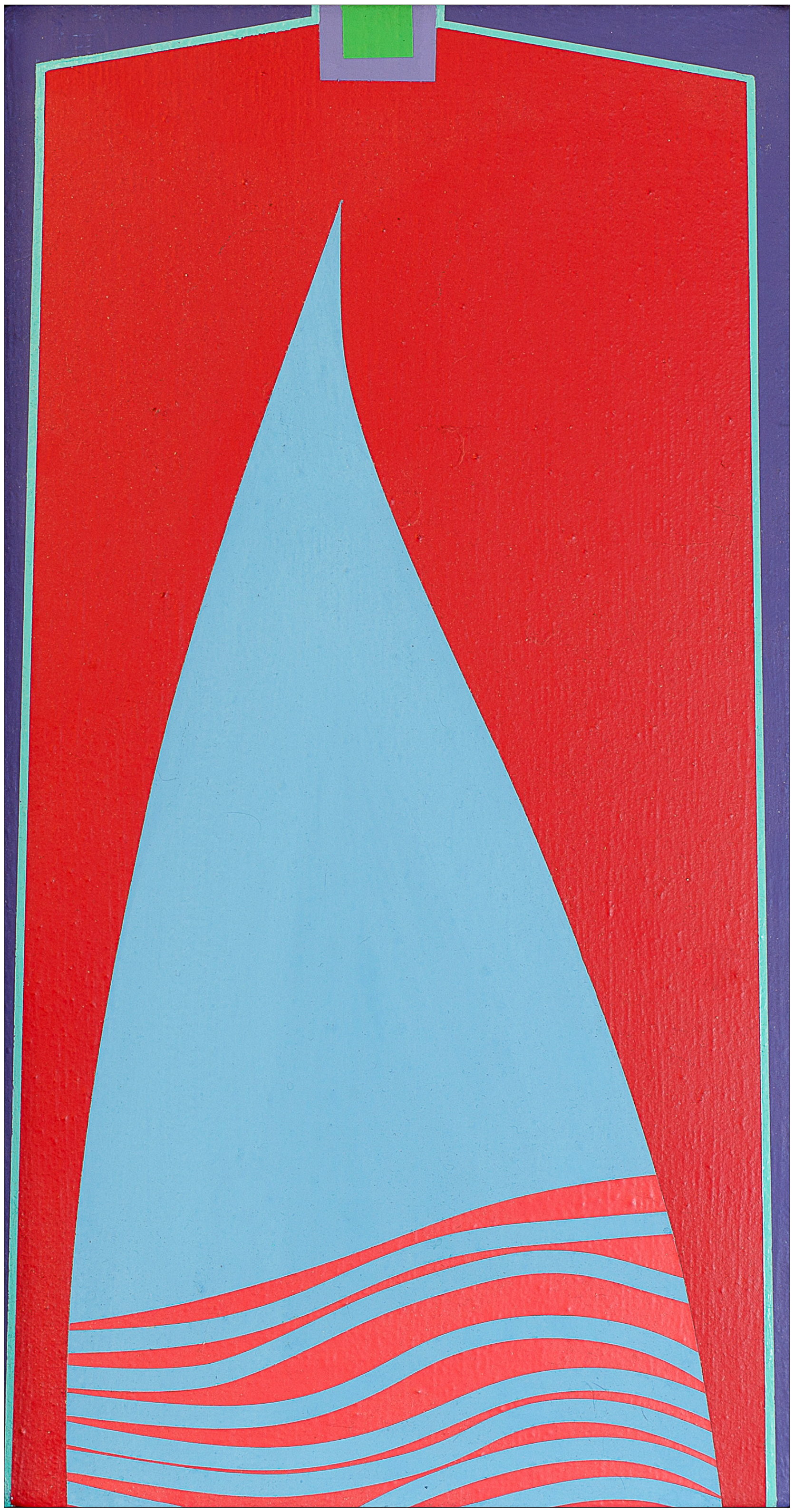
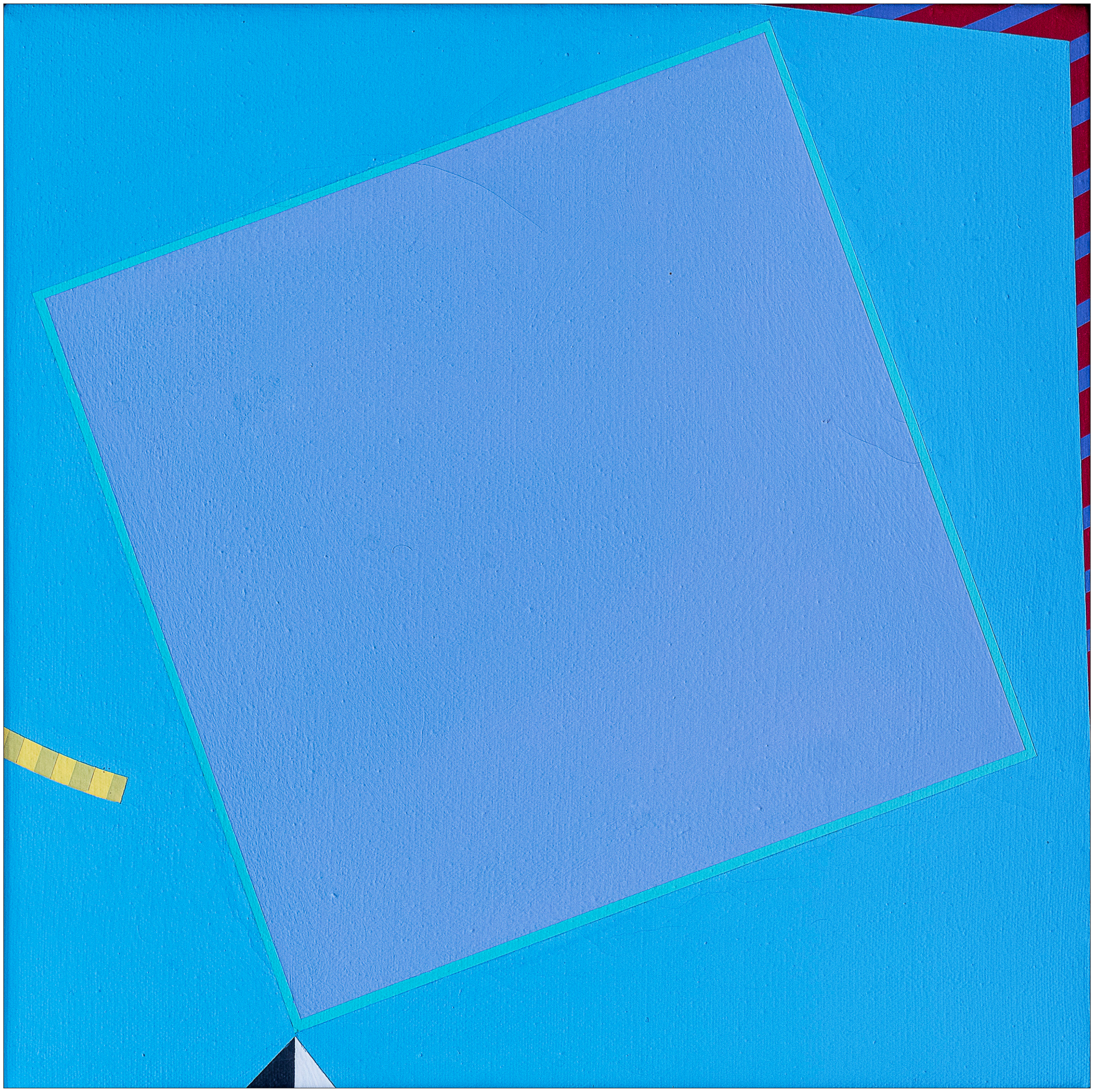
But I can't leave you on such a dour note. Sure, the 1990s and 2000s were dry for selling. But in the 2010s my father connected with a gallery called Modern Arts Midtown. (Check out pages 466–469.) Sales went back up—*way* back up. More on that fine institution later.



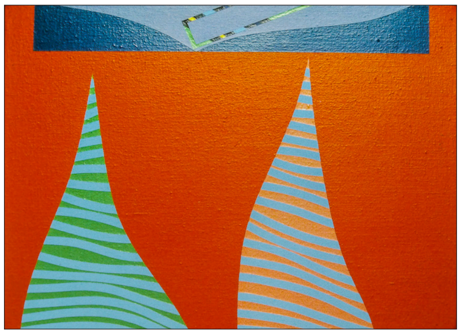
Untitled

1995. Acrylic on canvas, 17 x 9 in.
Collection of Alice and Austen Ulmer.

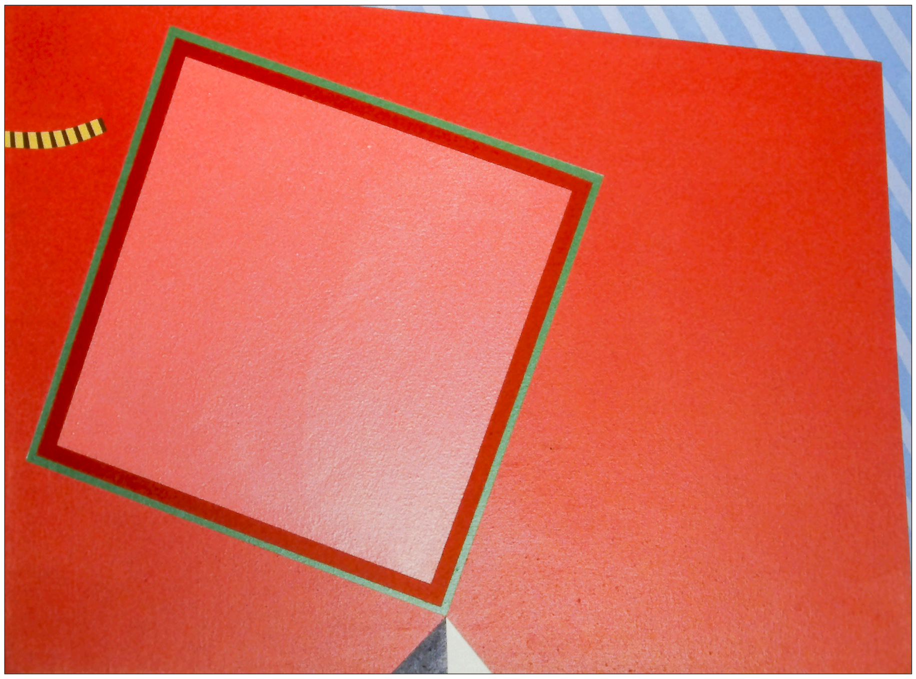


Untitled

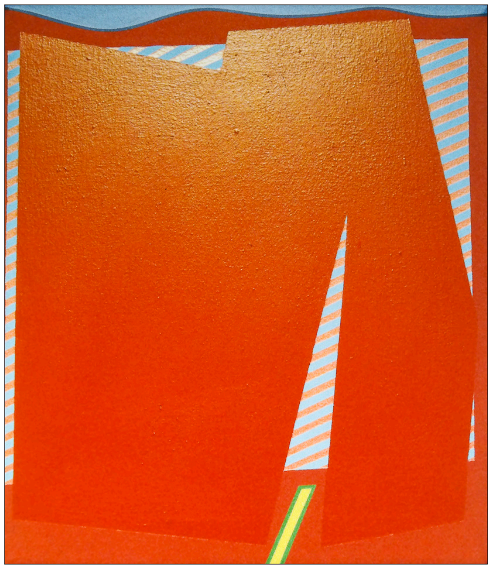
1995. Acrylic on canvas, 15 x 15 in.
Collection of Donald C. Hill.



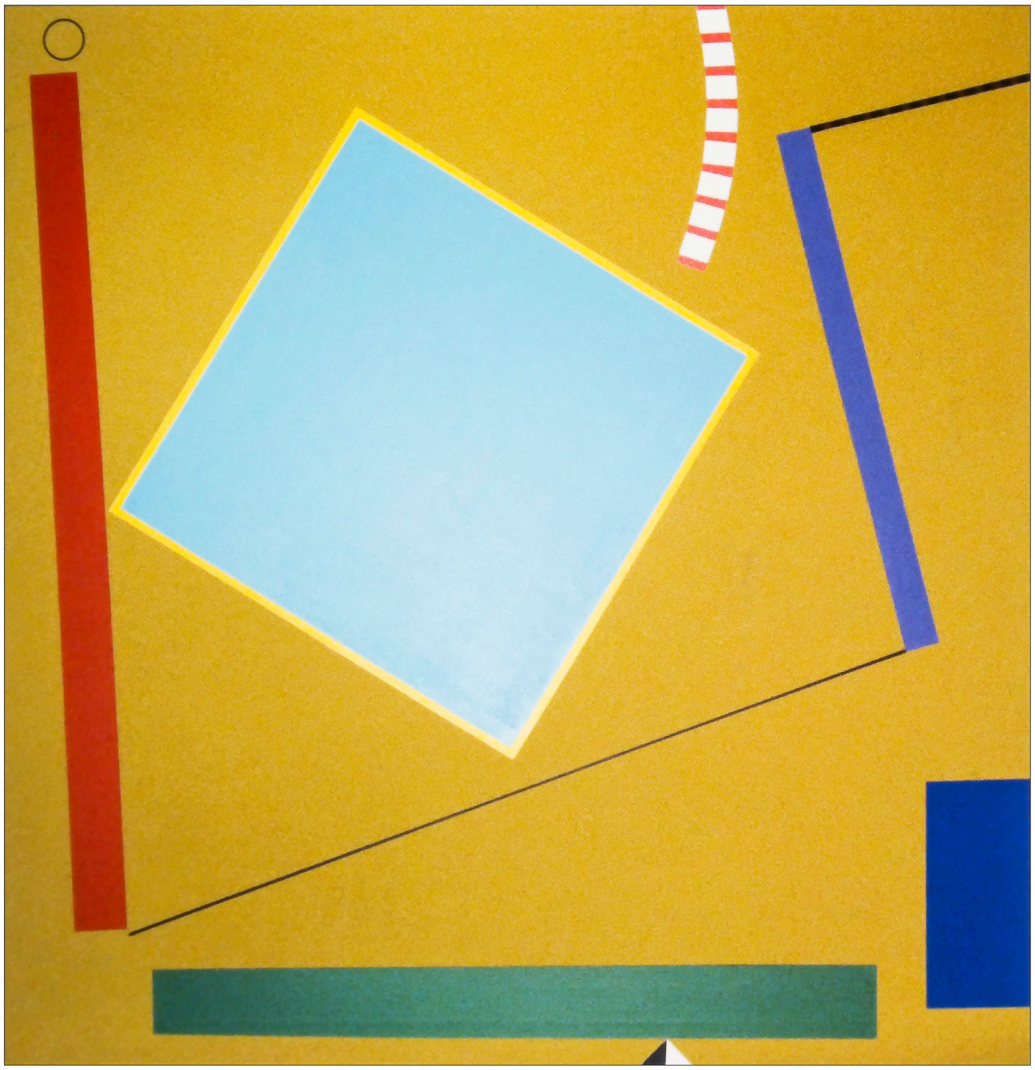
Kappa, 1995. Acrylic, 11 x 15 in.

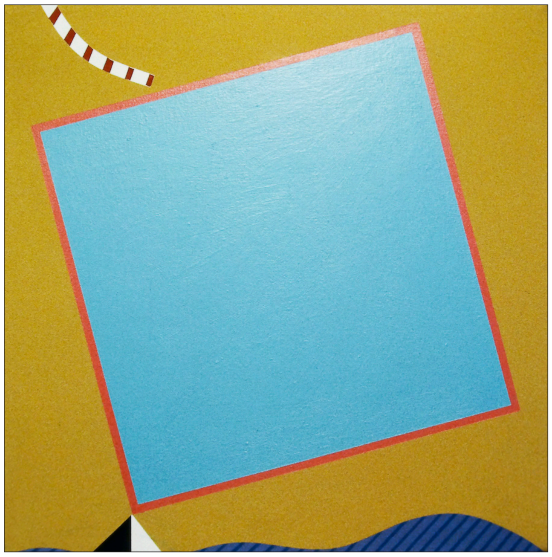


Untitled, 1995. Acrylic on canvas, 22 x 30 in.



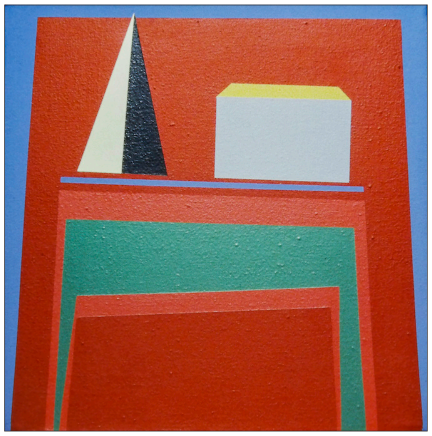
Book Cover, 1995.
Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 16 in.



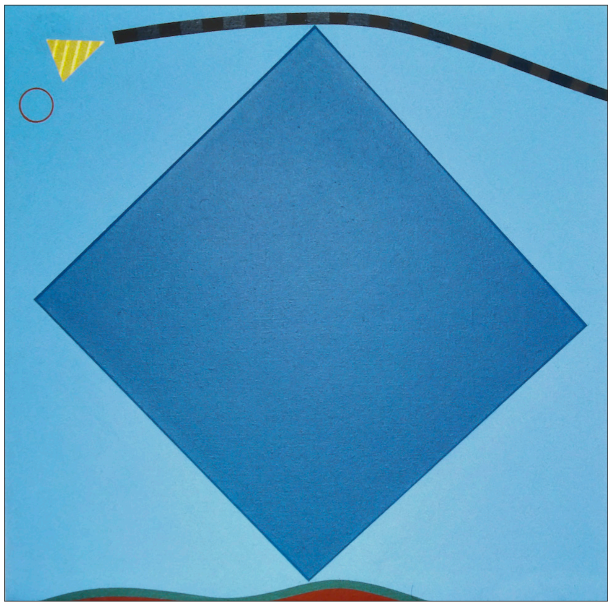


Gold Balance, 1995. Acrylic, 18 x 18 in.

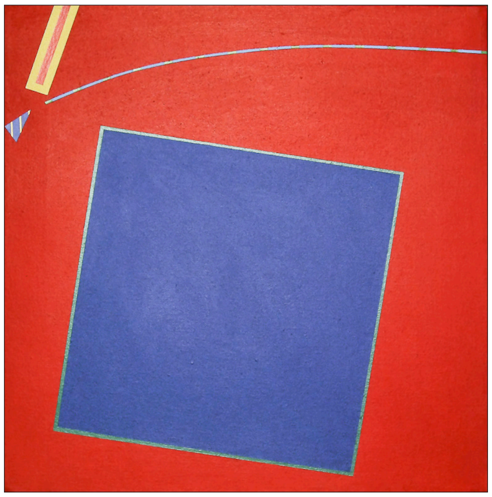
Gold Order, 1995. Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 34 in.



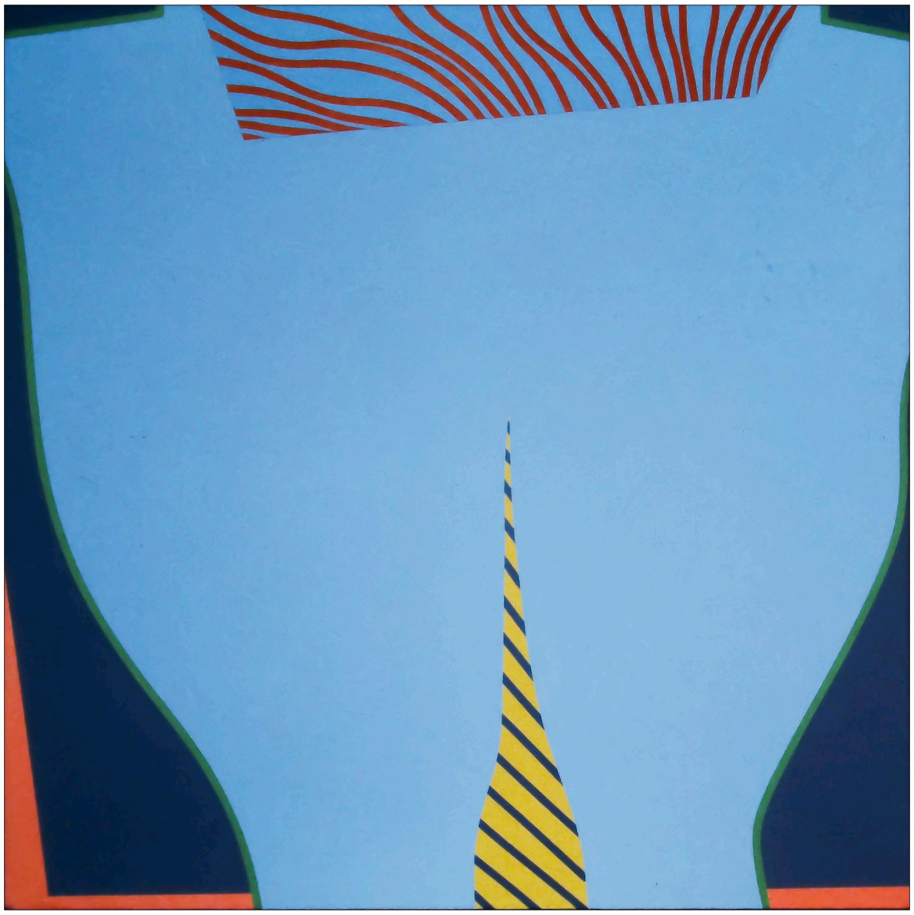
Still Life, 1996.
Acrylic on canvas, 14 x 14 in.



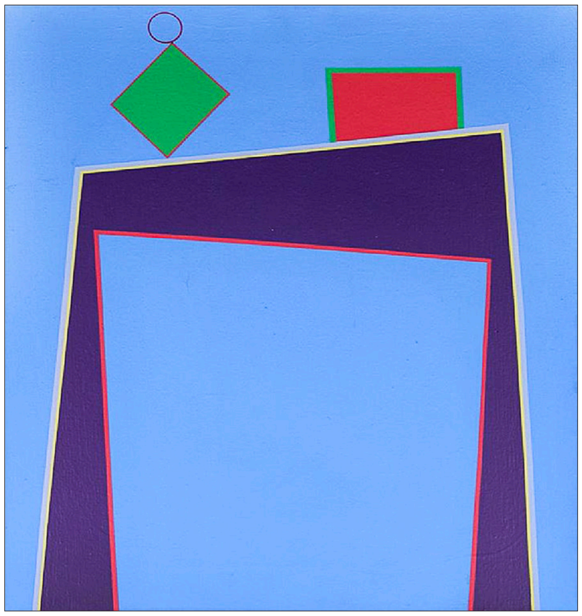
Balance, 1995. Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 20 in.
Collection of Patrick Rock.



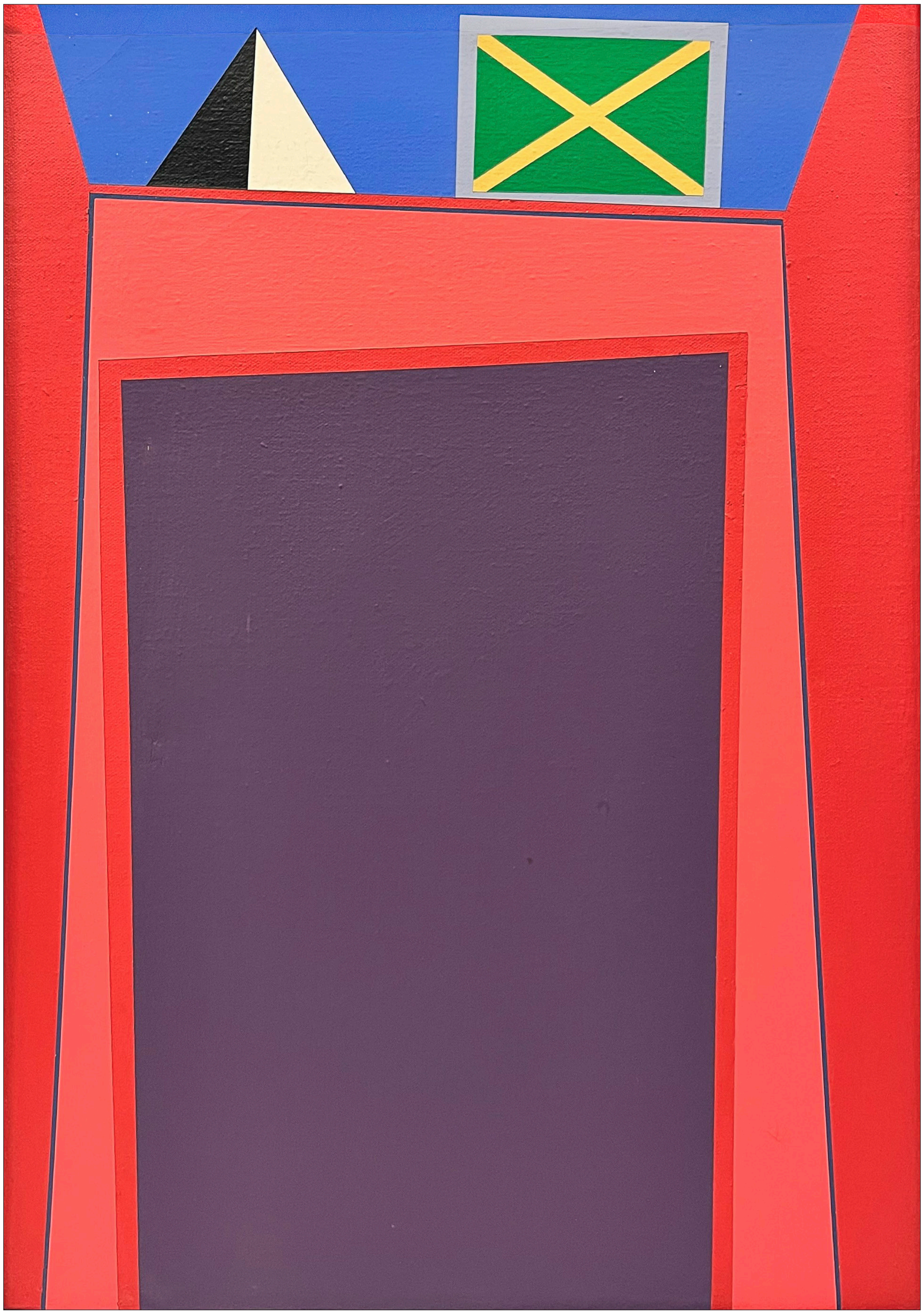
Untitled, 1995.
Acrylic on canvas, 16 x 16 in.



Untitled, 1995. Acrylic on canvas, 30 x 30 in.

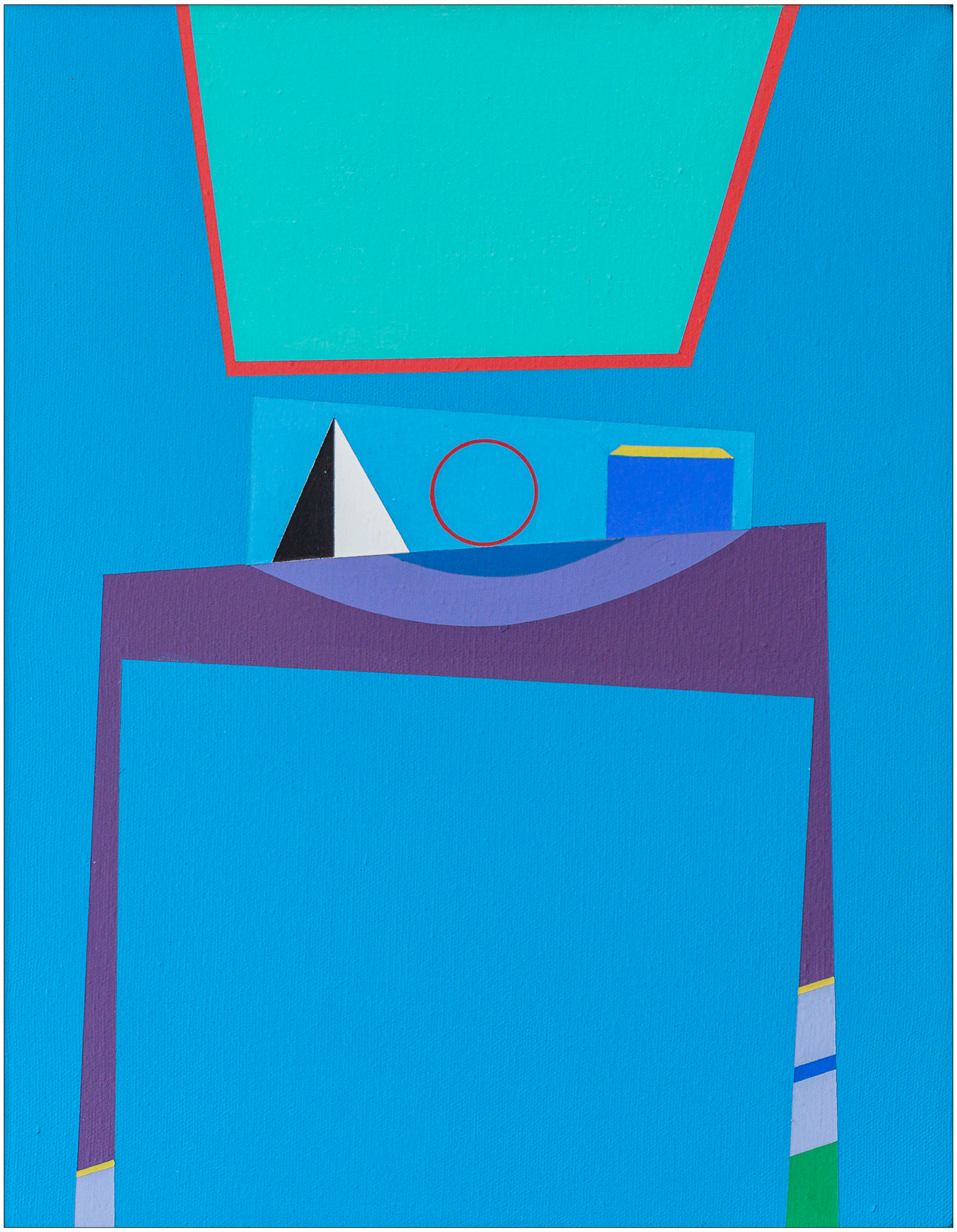


Still Life, 1996. Acrylic on canvas, 22 x 20 in.



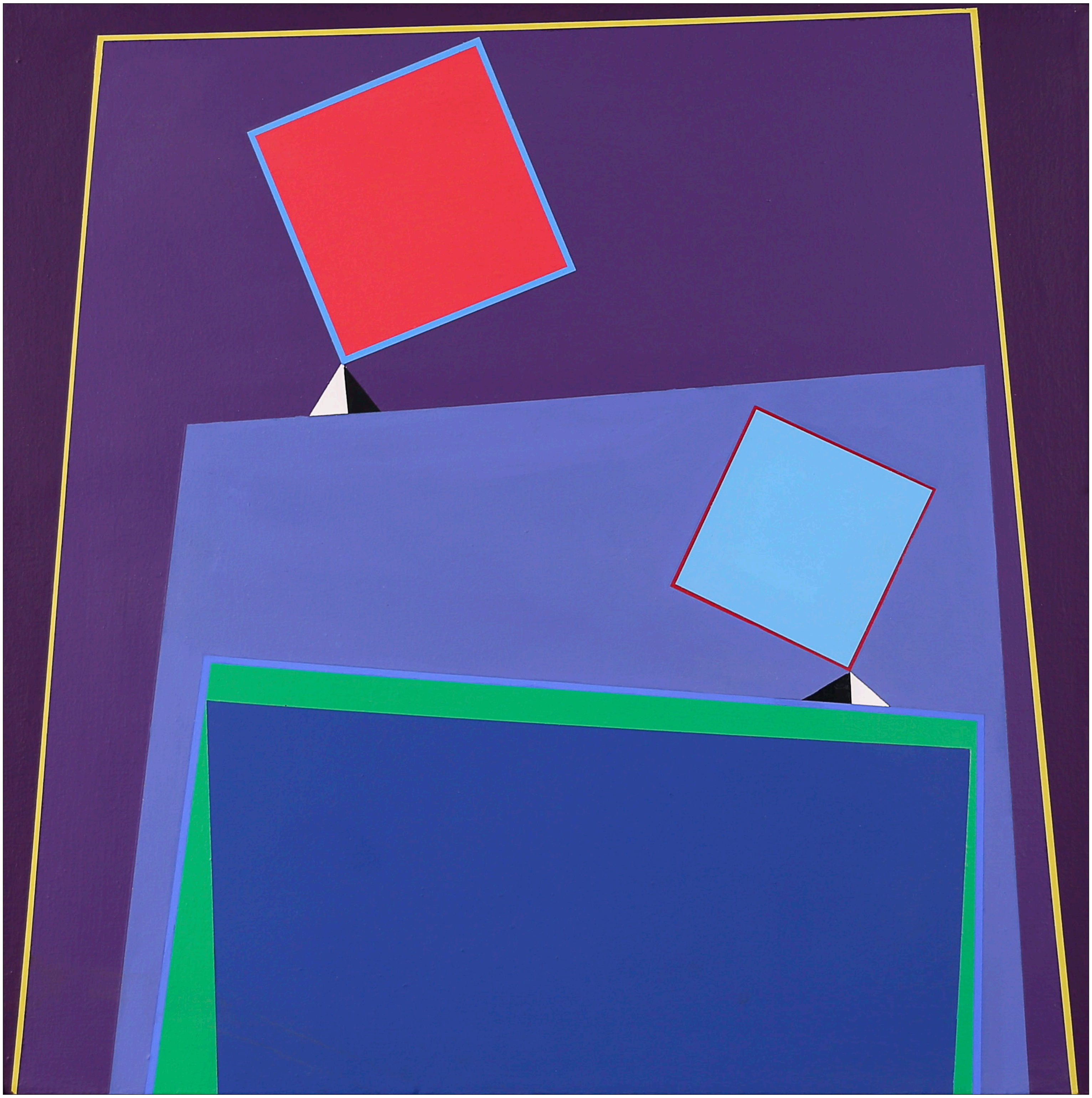
Saltire

1996. Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 14 in.
Collection of the Cranbrook Academy of Art.



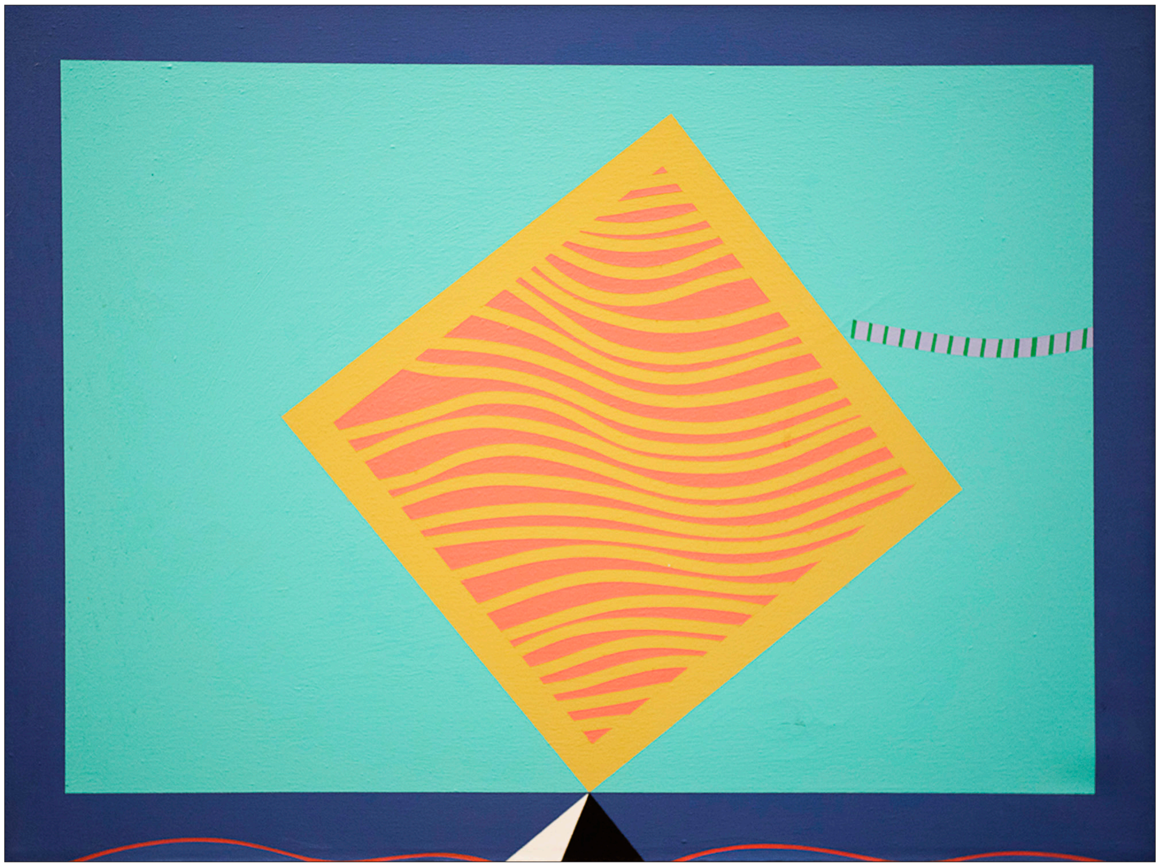
Geometric Table

1996. Acrylic on canvas, 14.5 x 11.5 in.
Collection of Kristin and Greg Janisch.

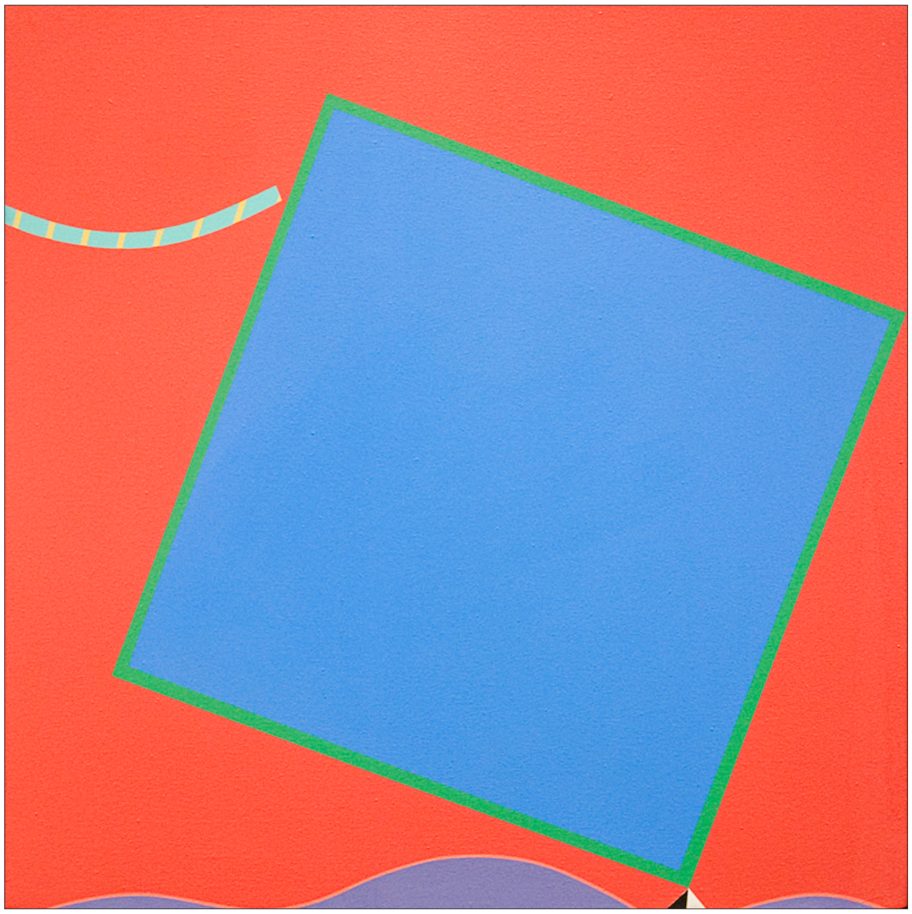


Untitled

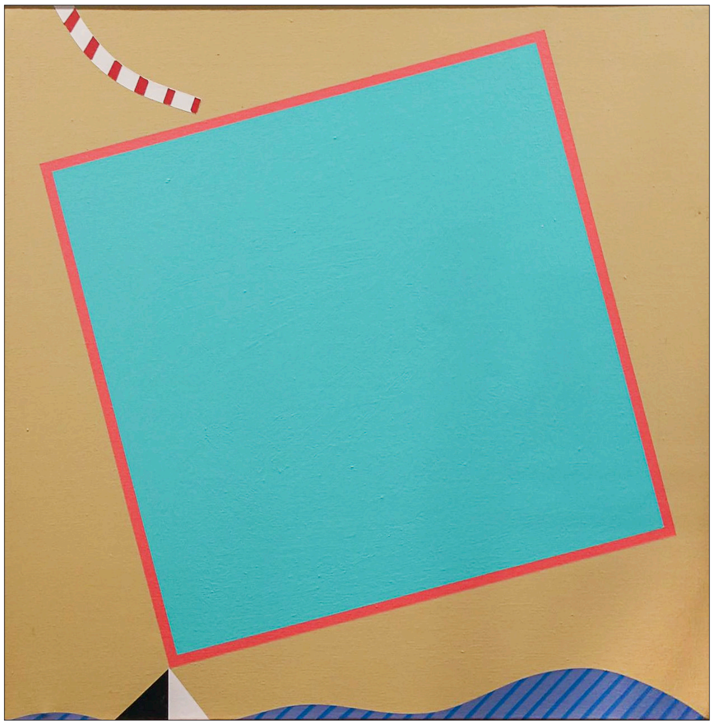
1996. Acrylic on canvas, 22.75 x 22.75 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



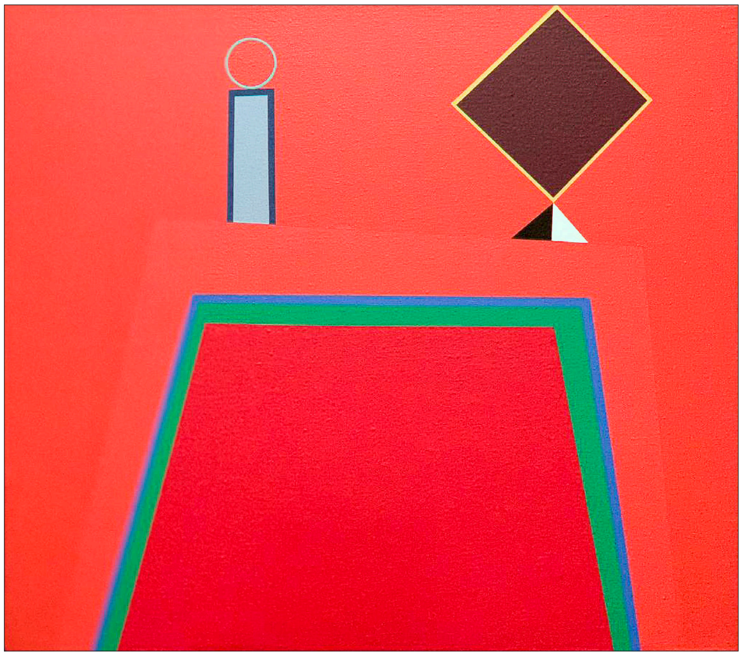
Untitled, 1996.
Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 24 in.



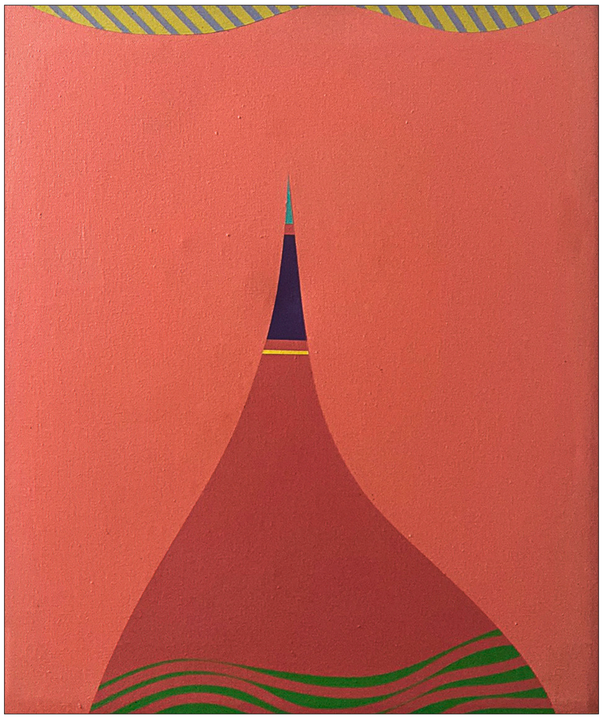
Over-Sized, 1996. Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 in.



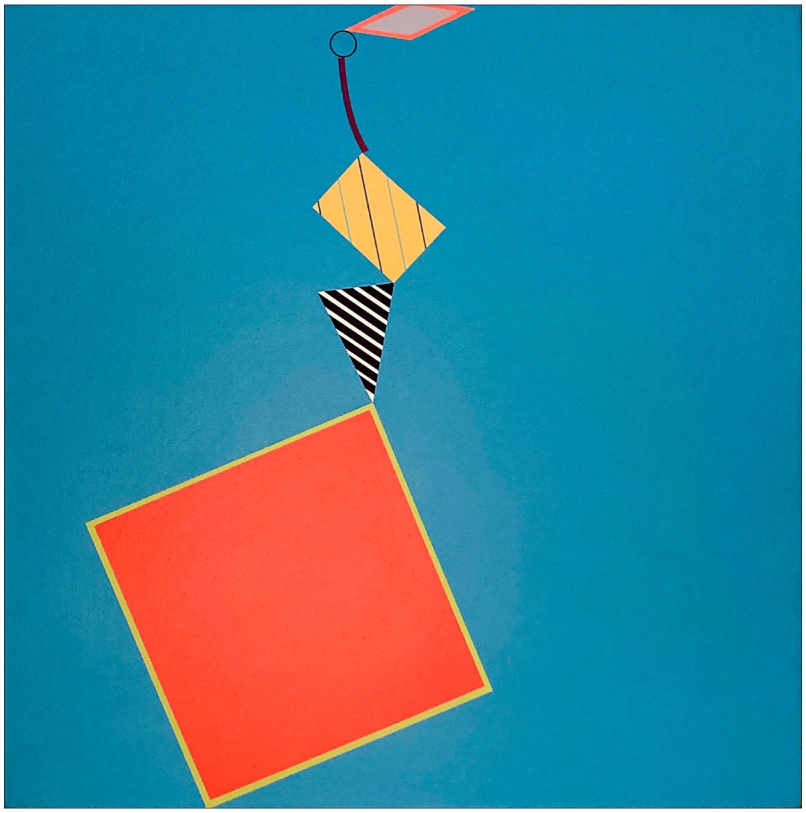
Unbalanced, 1995. Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 18 in.
Collection of James Campbell and John Phifer Marrs.



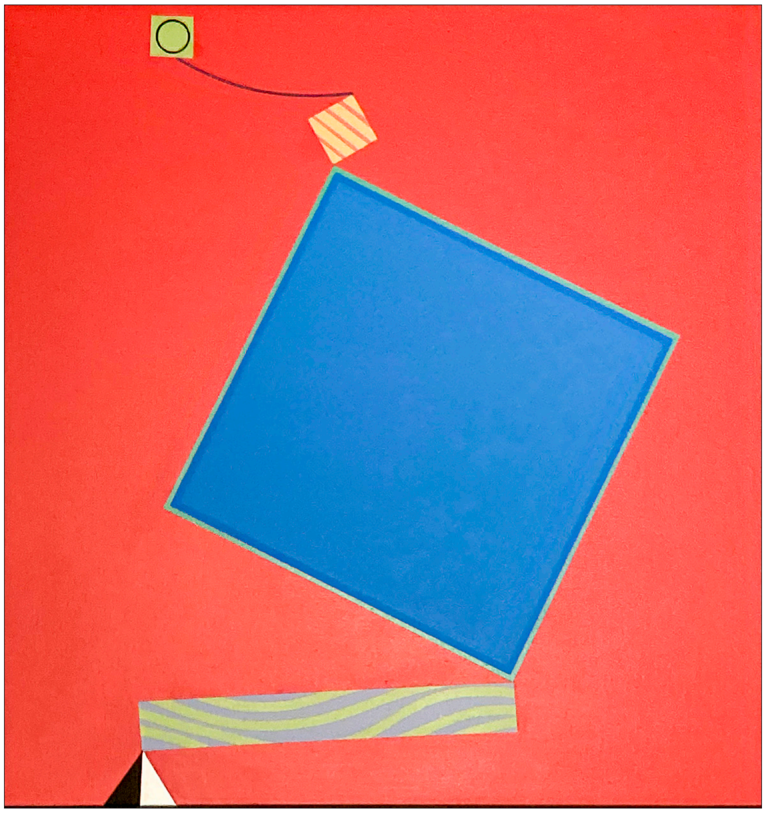
Landscape, 1996. Acrylic on canvas, 16 x 18 in.
Collection of Greg and Diana Freeman.



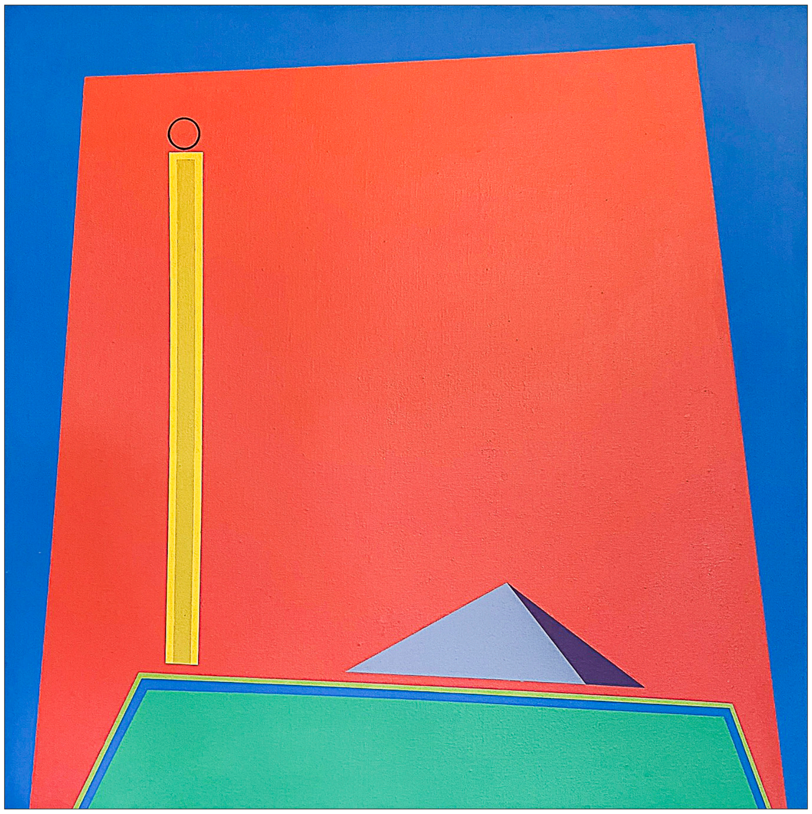
Untitled, 1995. Acrylic on canvas,
45 x 39 cm (17.75 x 15.5 in.).
Collection of Symantha Fossey.



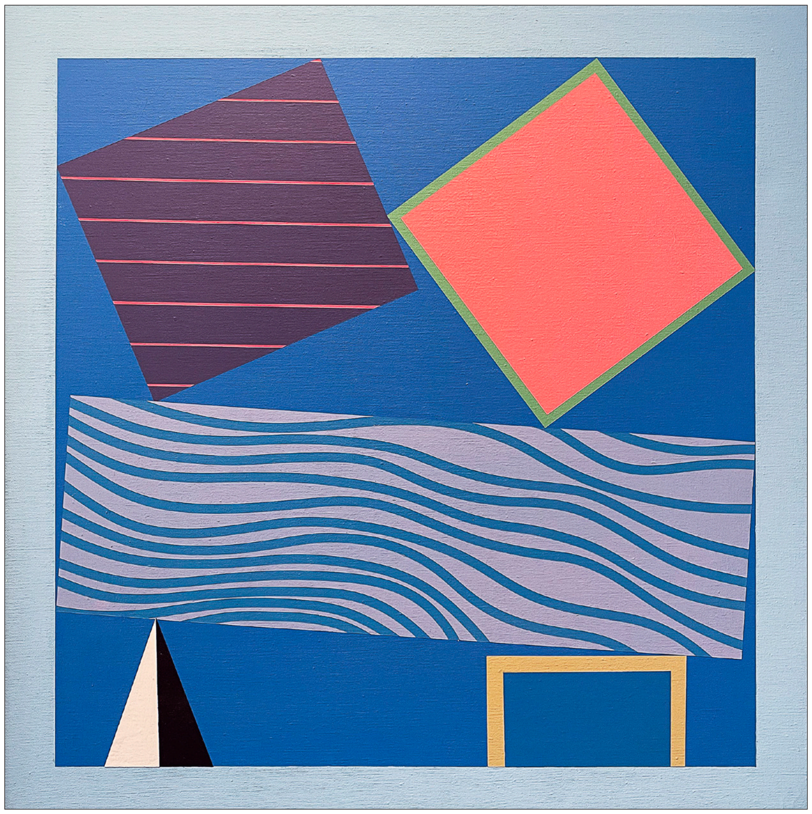
Achromatic Triangle, 1997. Acrylic on canvas, 25.75 x 25.75 in.
Collection of Jerry Weber.



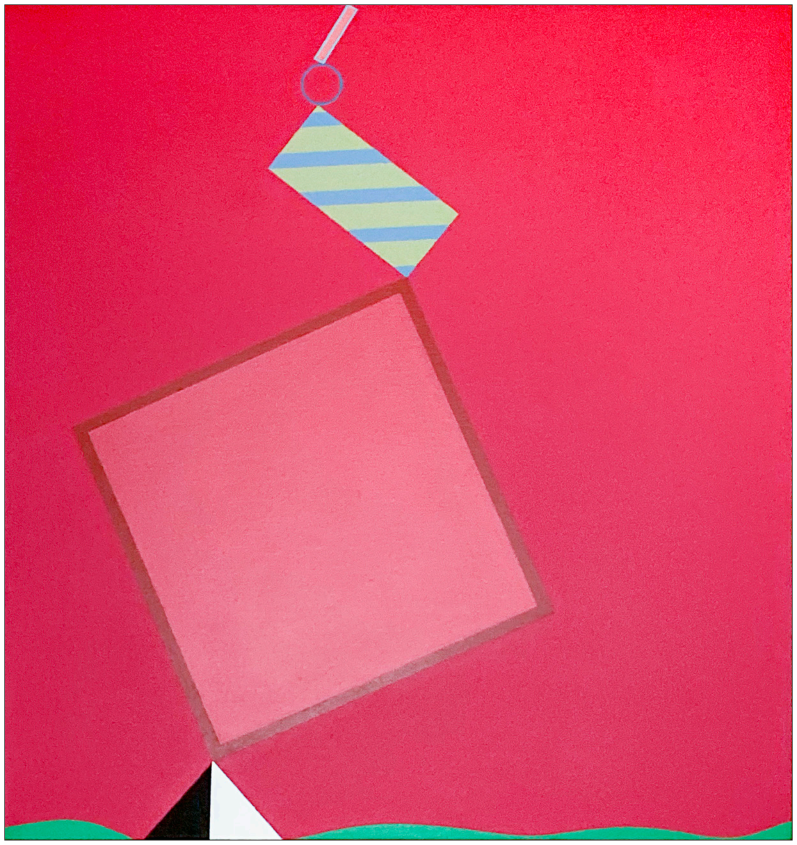
Off Center, 1997. Acrylic on canvas, 20.75 x 19.5 in.
Collection of Jerry Weber.



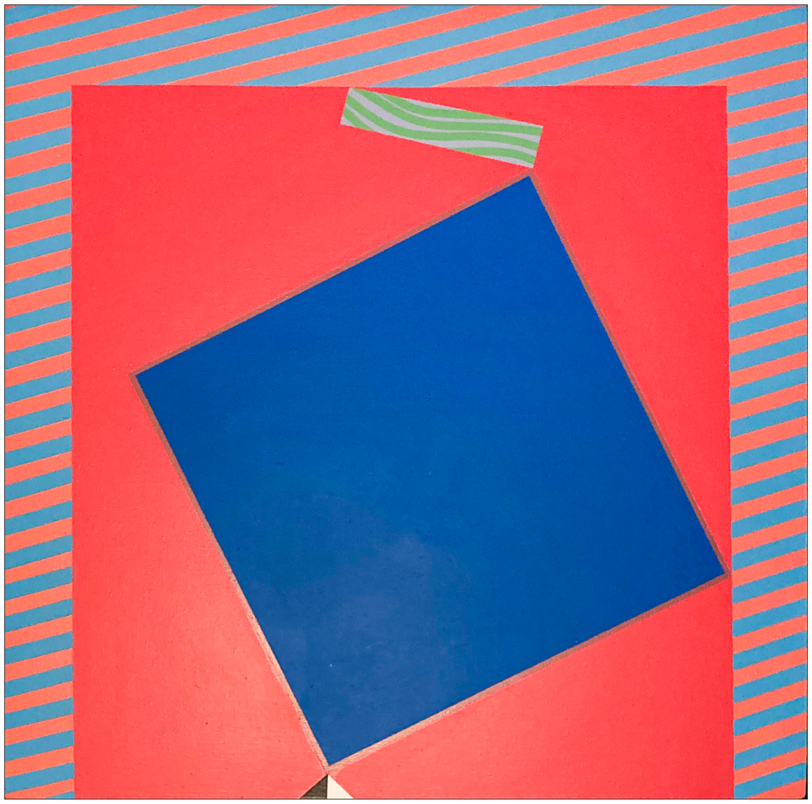
Untitled, 1997. Acrylic on canvas, 22 x 22 in.
Collection of Dr. Chris Curry.



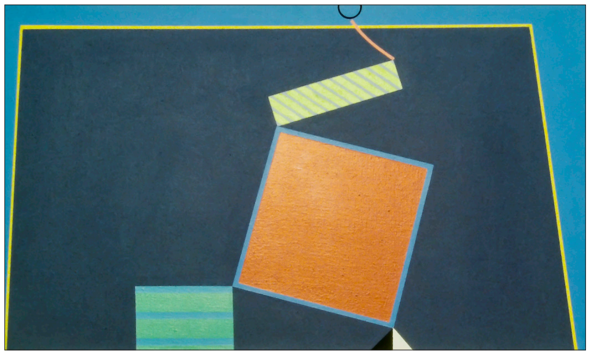
Untitled, 1999. Acrylic on canvas, 22 x 22 in.
Collection of Patrick Rock.



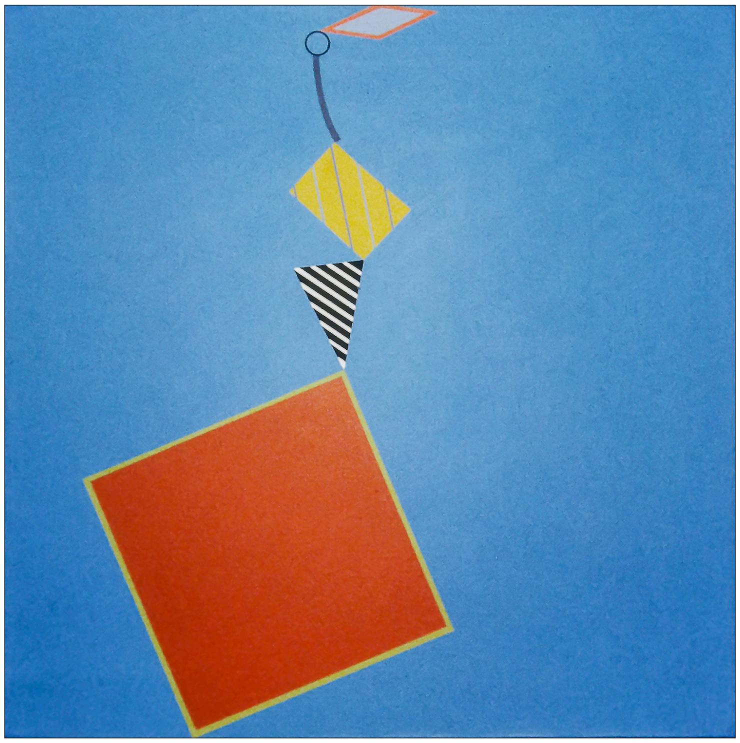
Little Blue Circle, 1999. Acrylic on canvas, 22.75 x 21.5 in.
Collection of Jerry Weber.



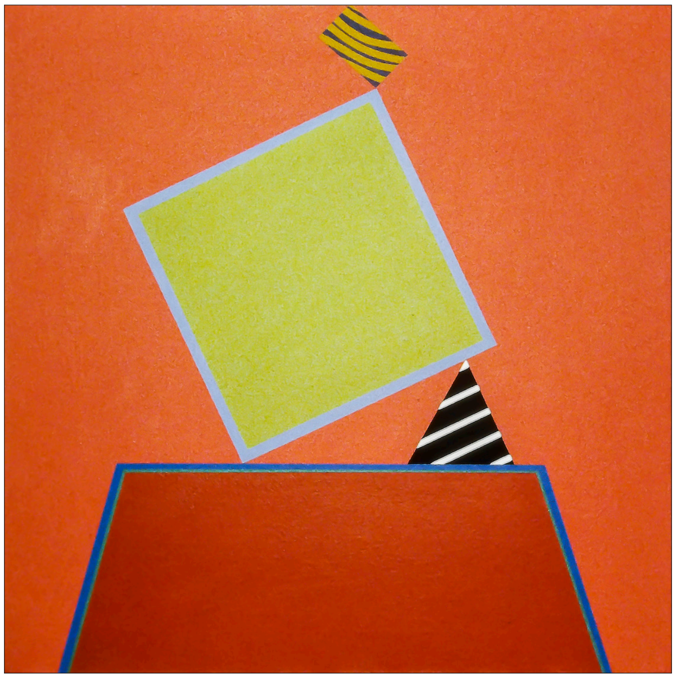
Touching Three Corners, 1997. Acrylic on canvas, 25 x 24.5 in.
Collection of Jerry Weber.



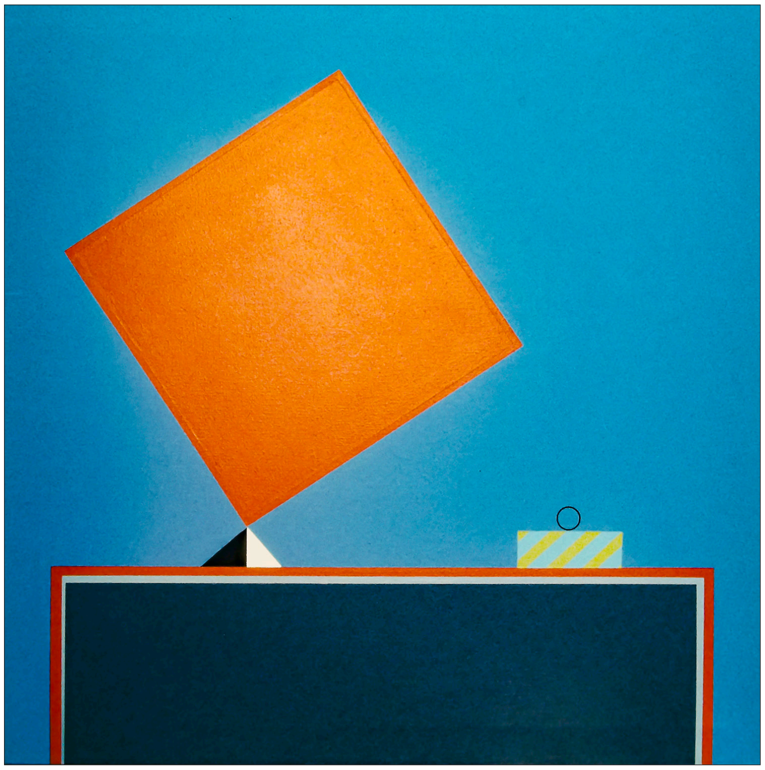
Perfect Balance II, 1998.
Acrylic on canvas, 13 x 20 in.



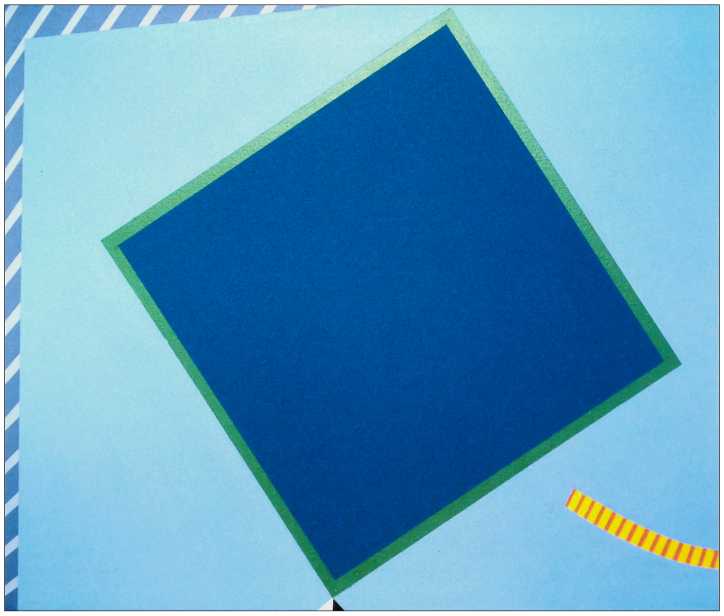
Unbalanced, 1997. Acrylic on canvas, 26 x 26 in.



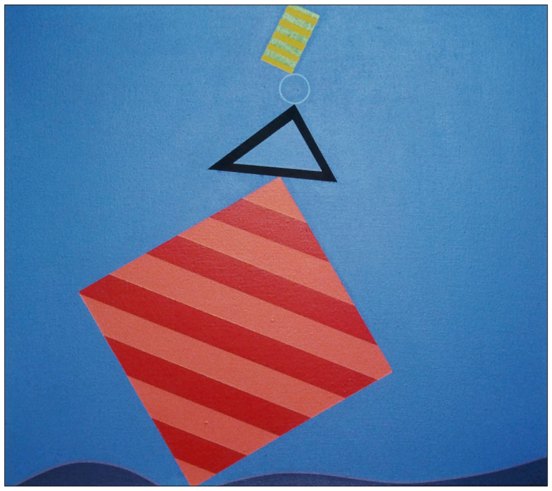
Perfect Balance, 1997. Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 in.



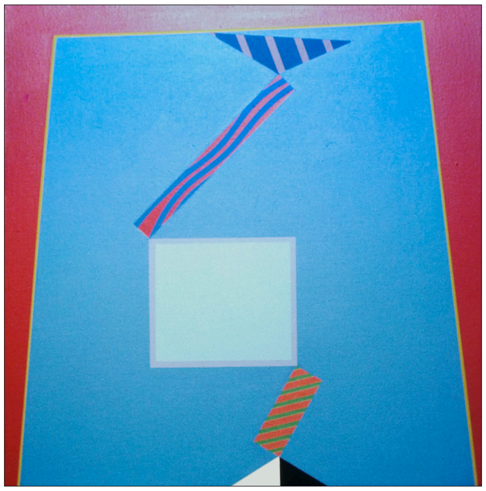
Untitled, 1997. Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 28 in.



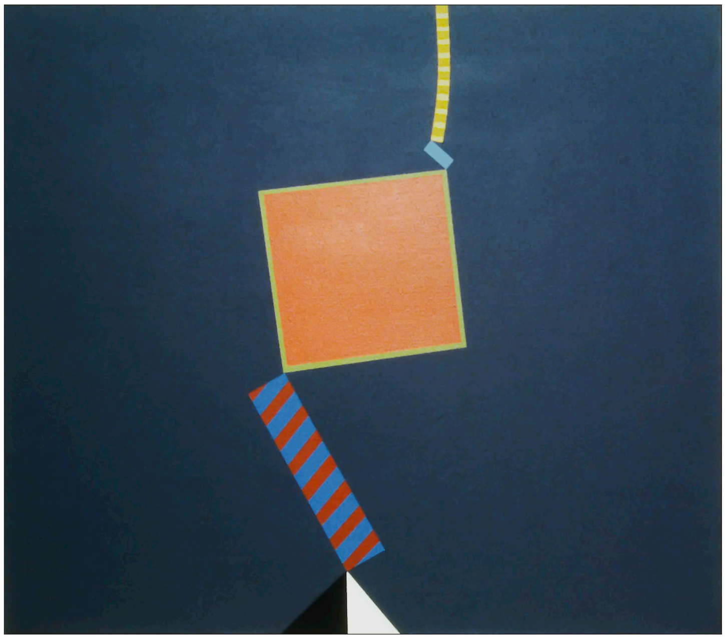
Title Square, 1996. Acrylic on canvas, 21 x 25 in.



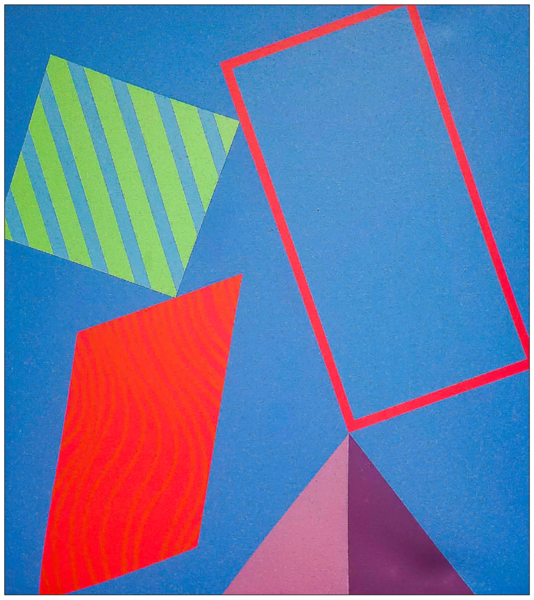
Untitled, 1999. Acrylic, 17 x 19.5 in.



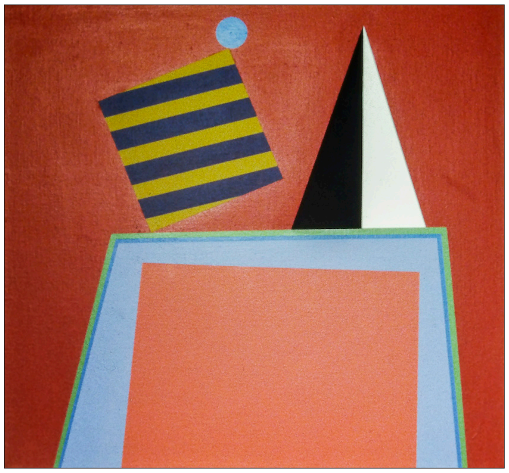
1995–99. Acrylic on canvas.



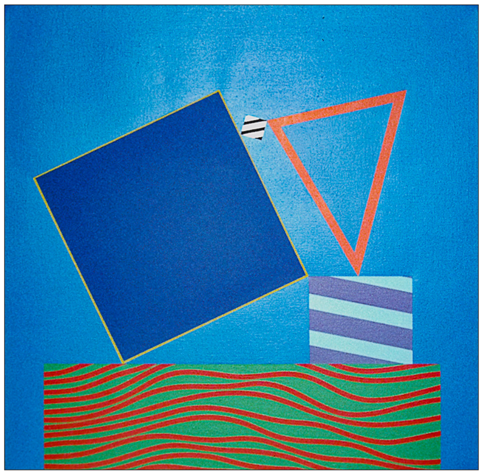
Off Balance, 1997. Acrylic on canvas, 21 x 24 in.



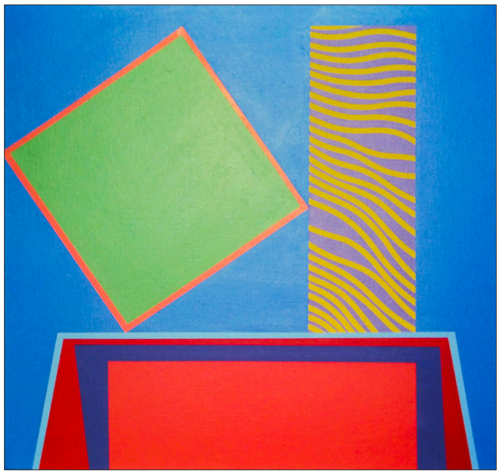
1995–99. Acrylic on canvas.
Collection of Criss Library, UNO.



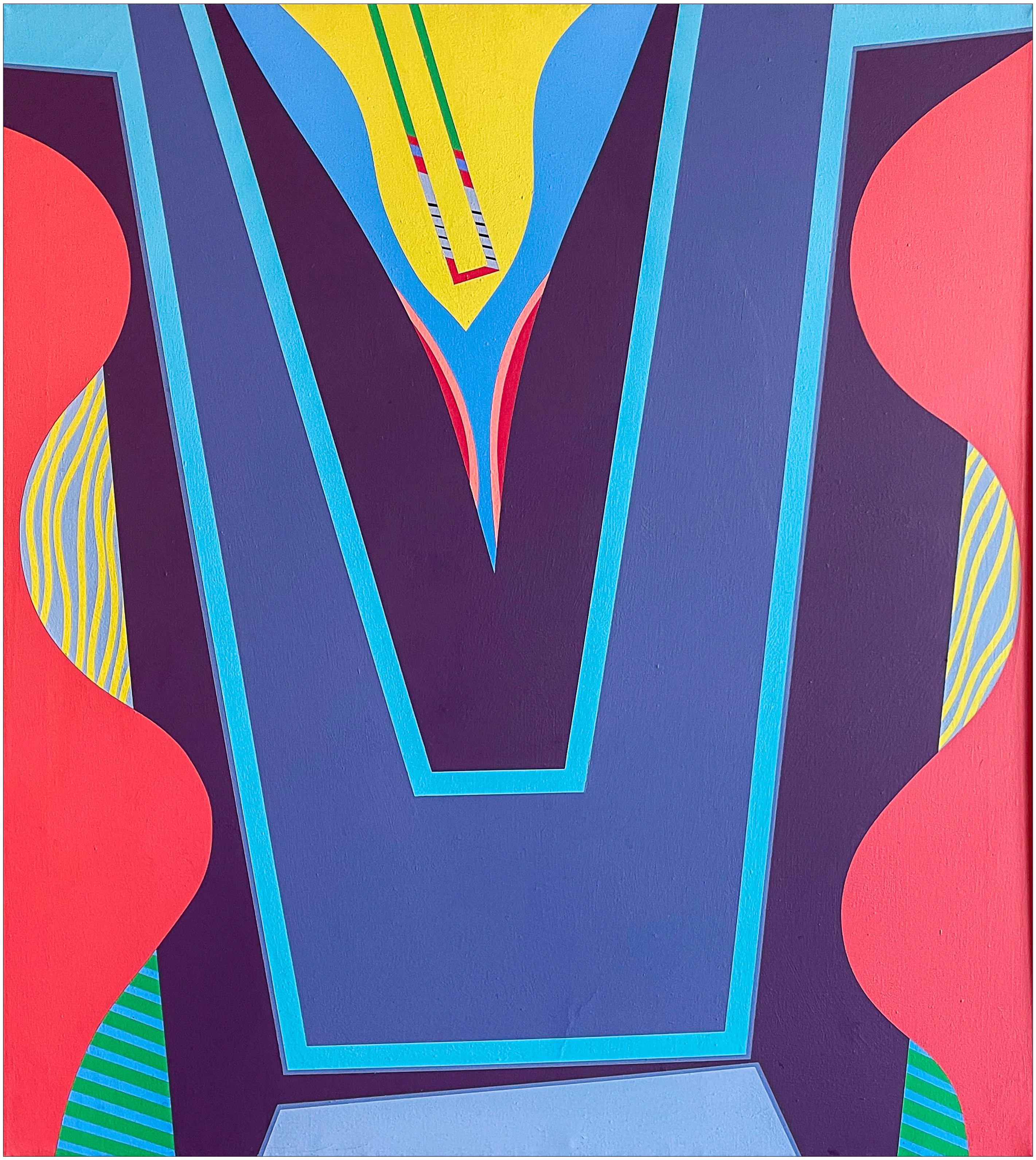
Still Life, 1999. Acrylic, 17 x 18 in.



1995–99. Acrylic on canvas.

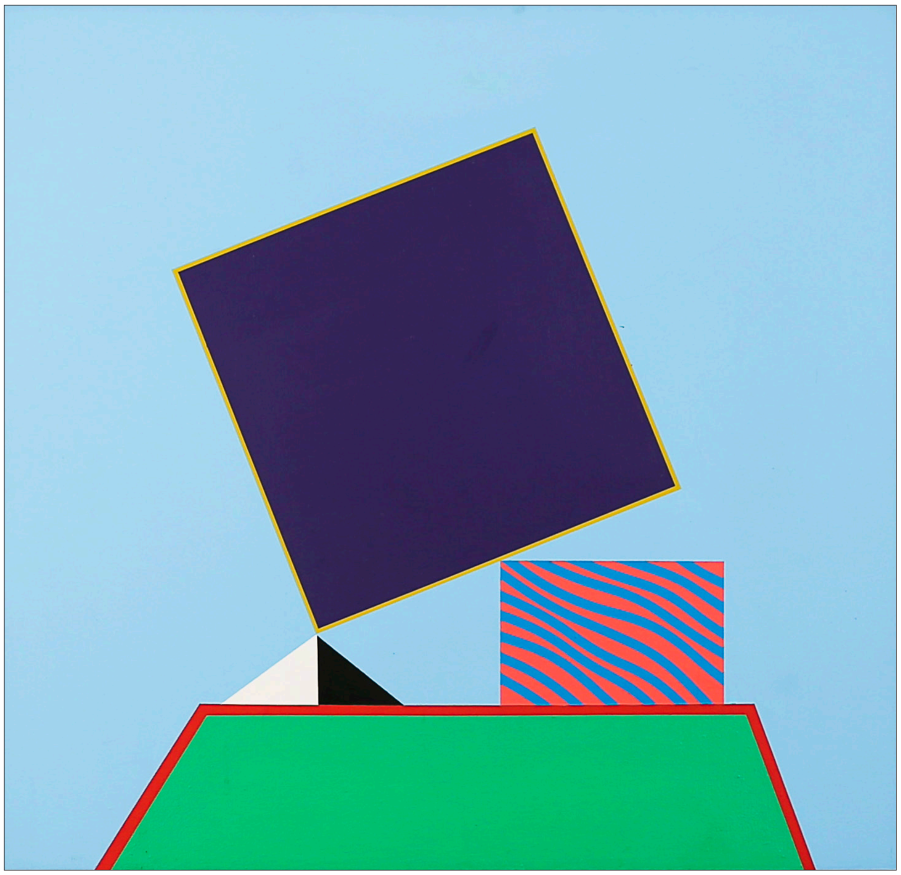


1995–99. Acrylic on canvas.

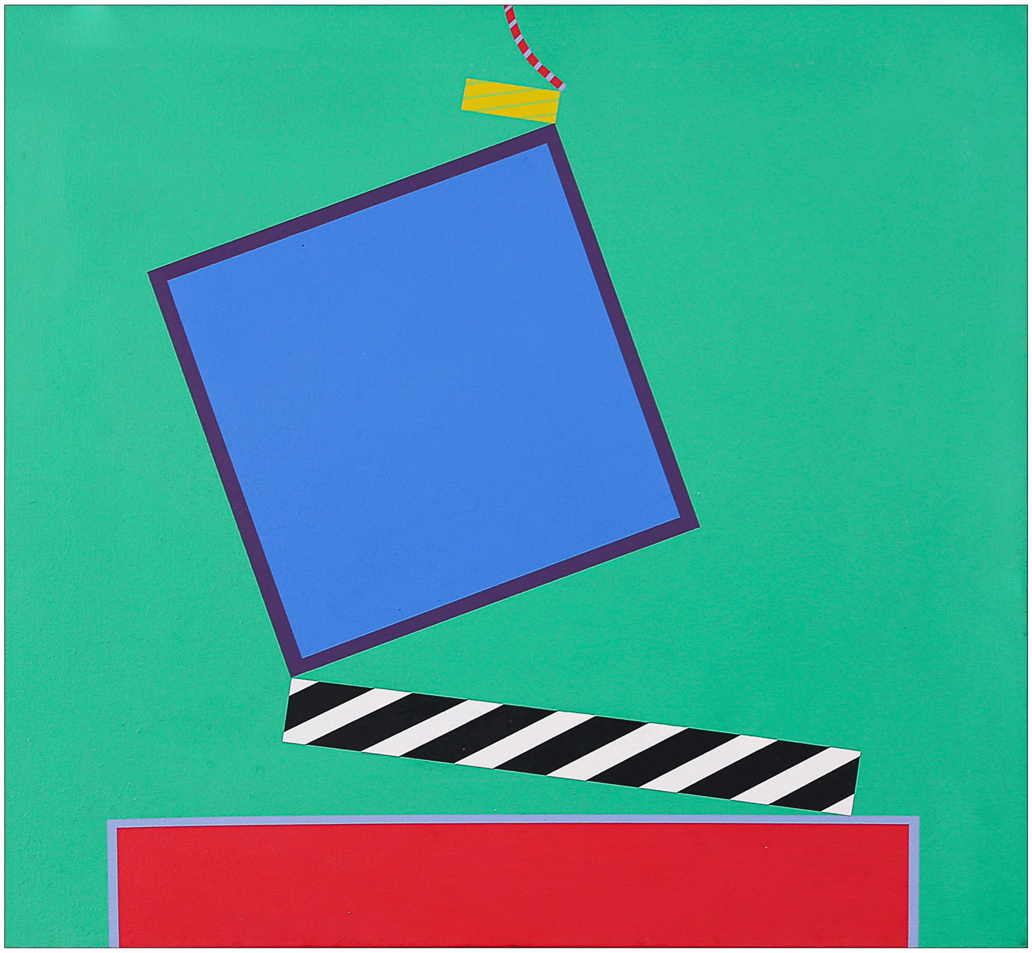


Jezebel

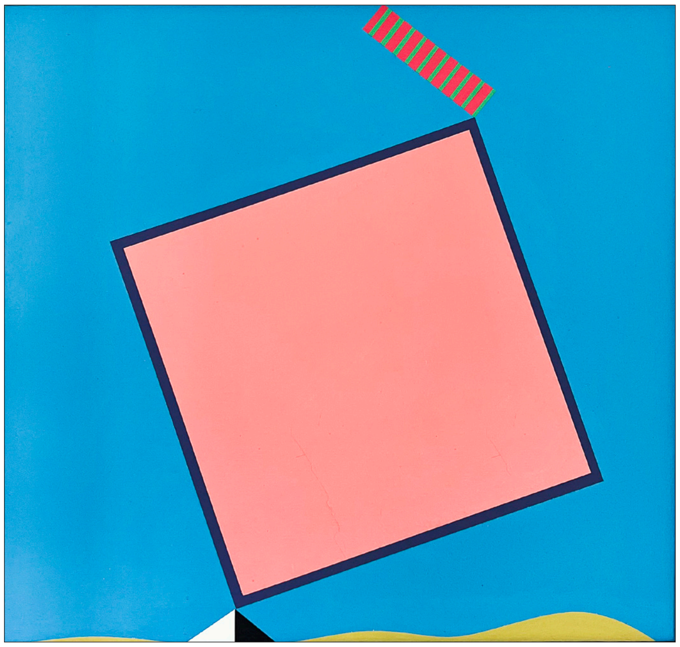
1997. Acrylic on canvas, 38 x 34 in.
Collection of Mary Jochim.



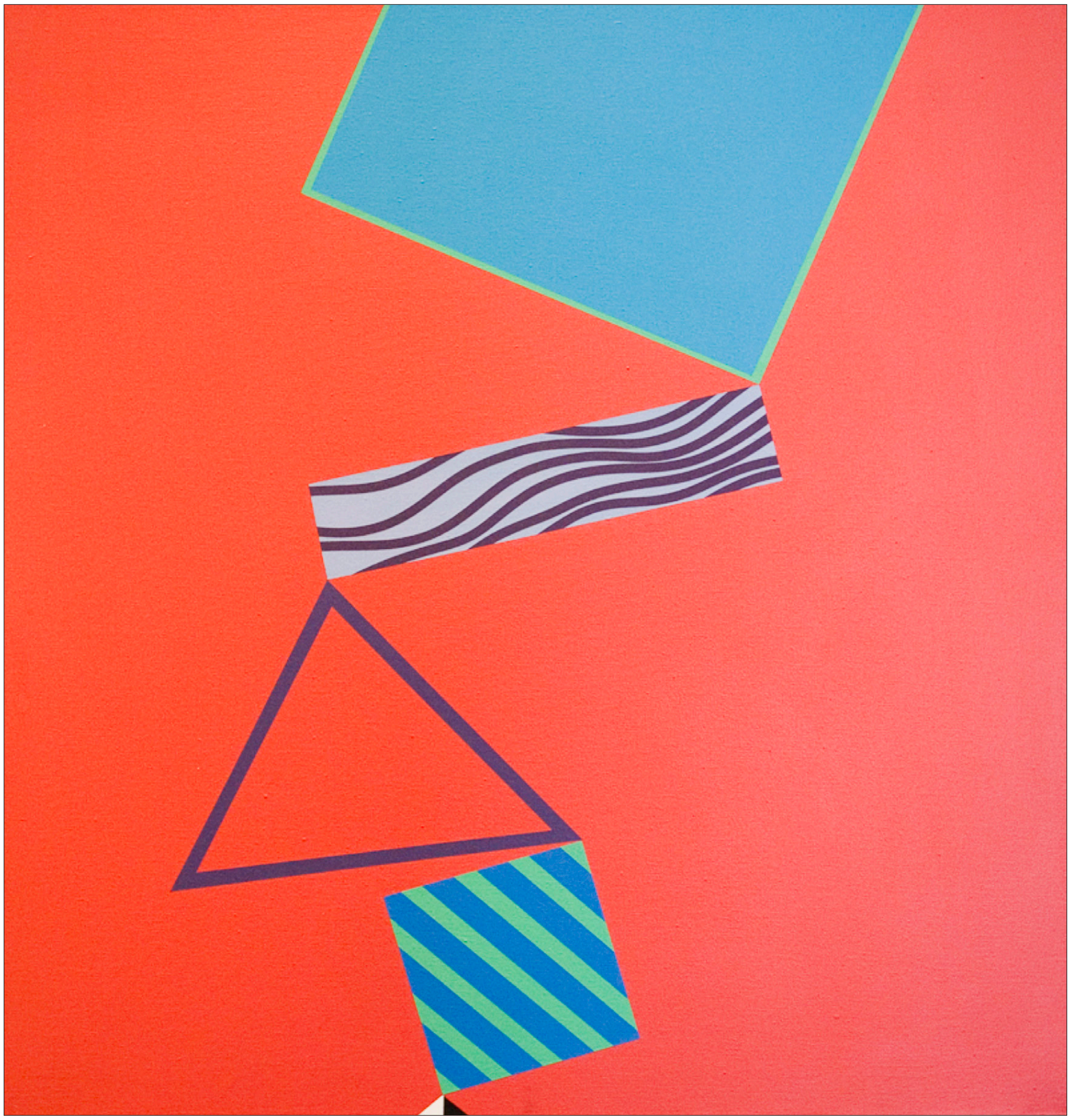
Not Balanced, 1998. Acrylic on canvas, 22.75 x 23.75 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



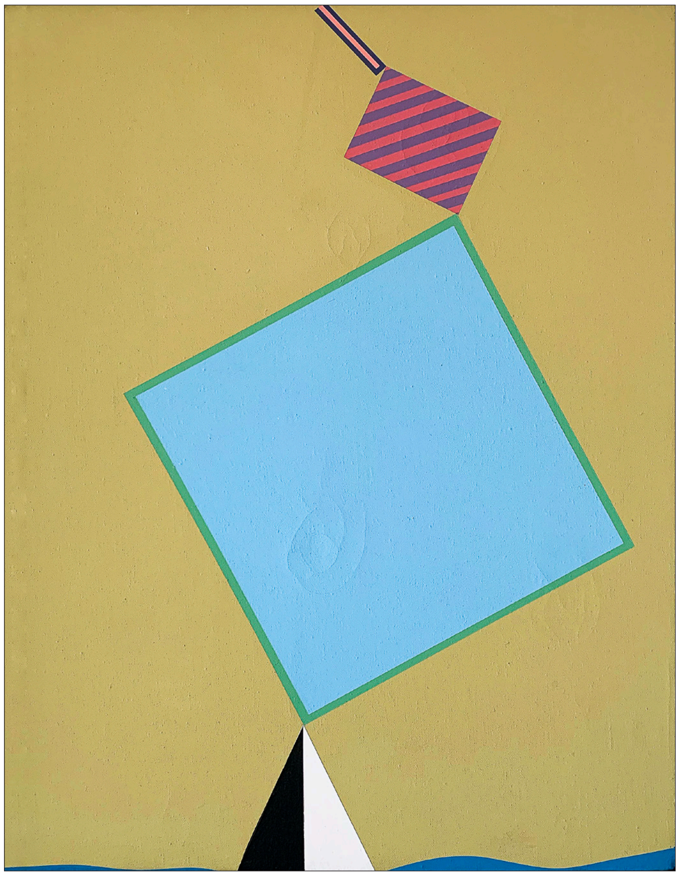
Take One, 1997. Acrylic on canvas, 24.75 x 22.75 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



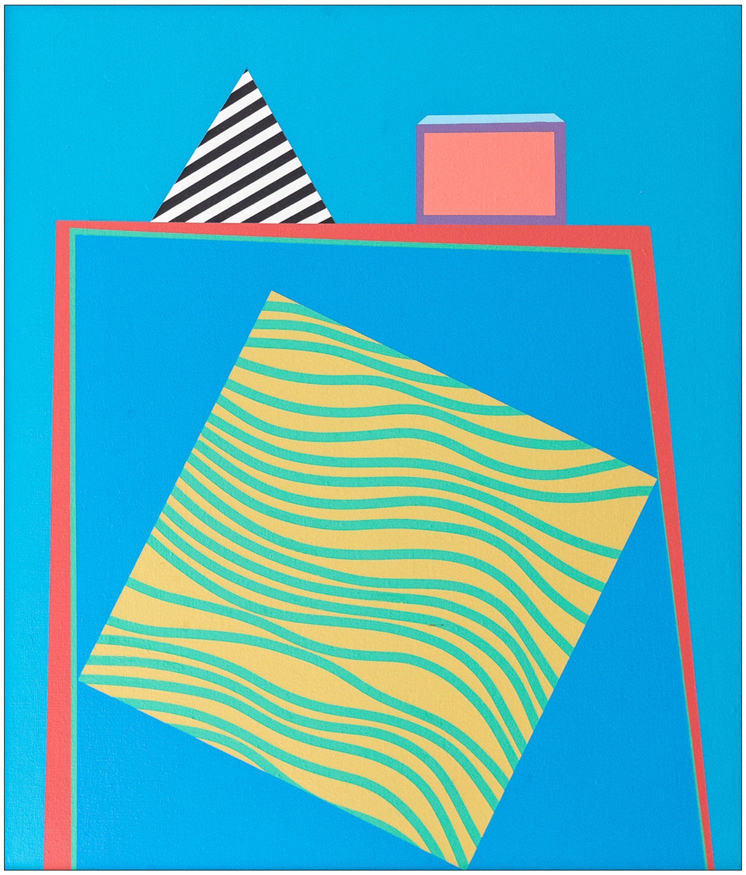
Untitled, 1999.
Acrylic on canvas, 16.75 x 17.5 in.
Collection of Lance Koenig.



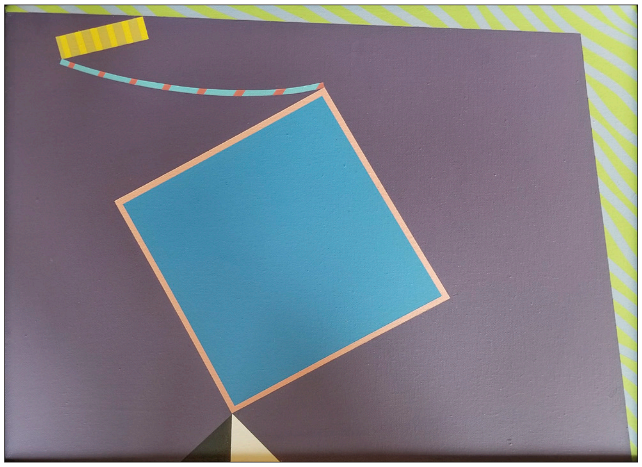
Out of Balance, 1998.
Acrylic on canvas, 30 x 29 in.



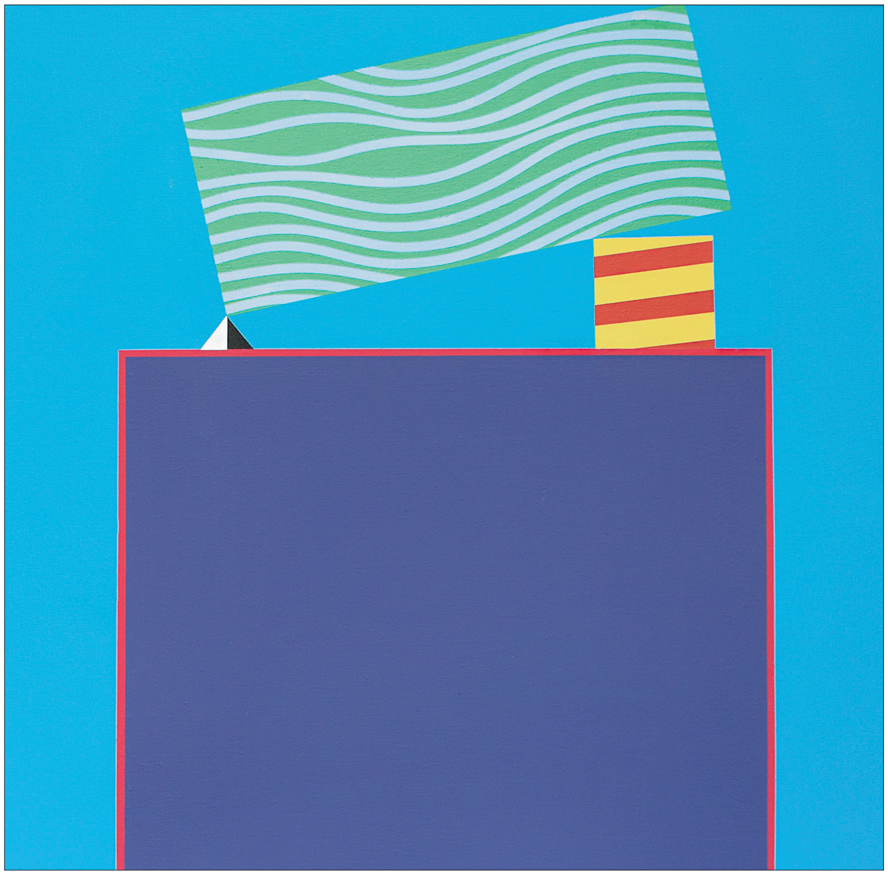
Ten-Inch Square, 1999. Acrylic on canvas, 23.5 x 18 in.
Collection of Todd ("T. J.") and Shanna Freeman.



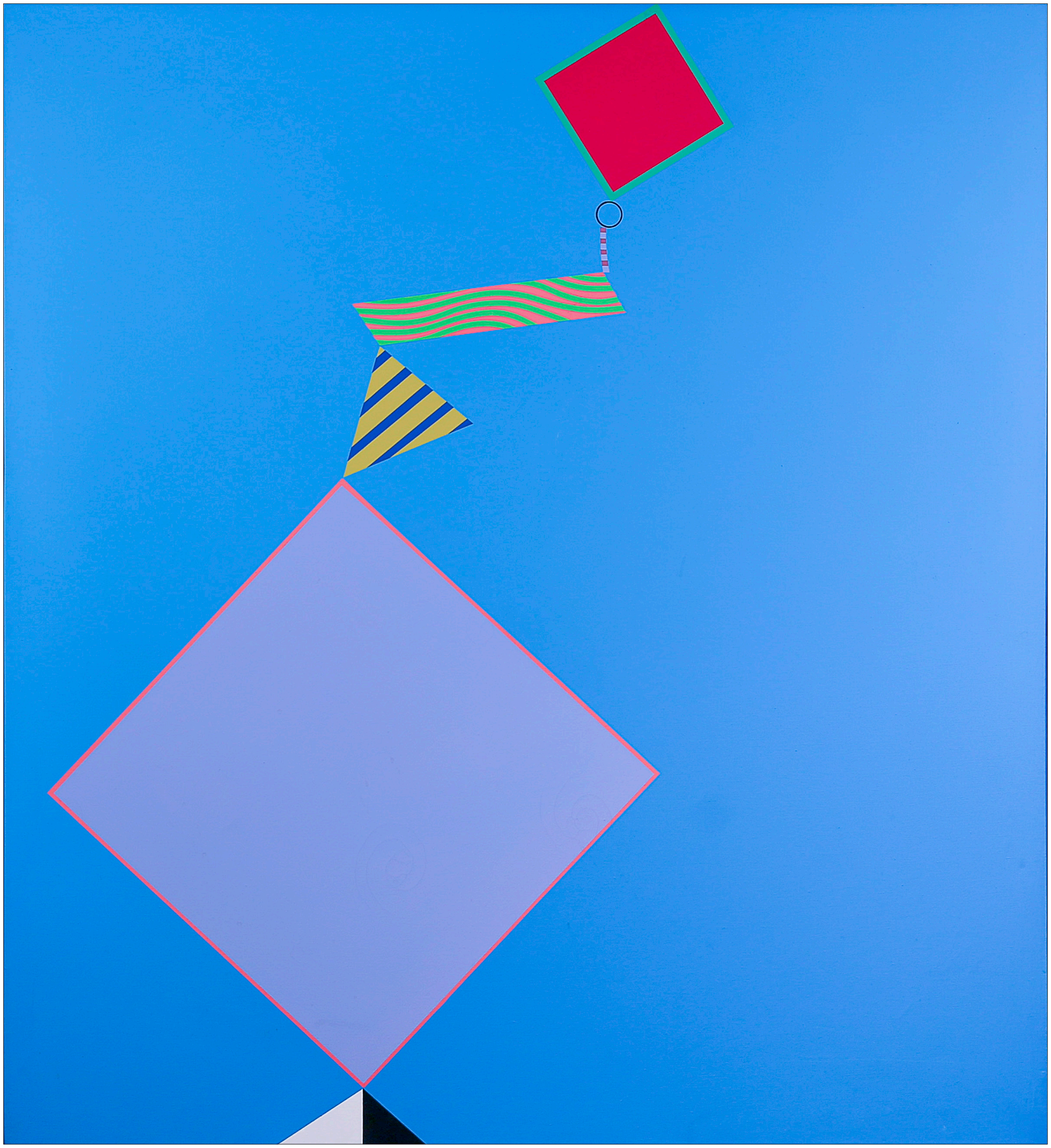
Untitled, 1998. Acrylic on canvas, 23 x 20 in.
Collection of Katy and Jon Welles.



Out of Balance, 1998.
Acrylic on canvas, 13.5 x 18 in.
Collection of David and Beverly Freeman.

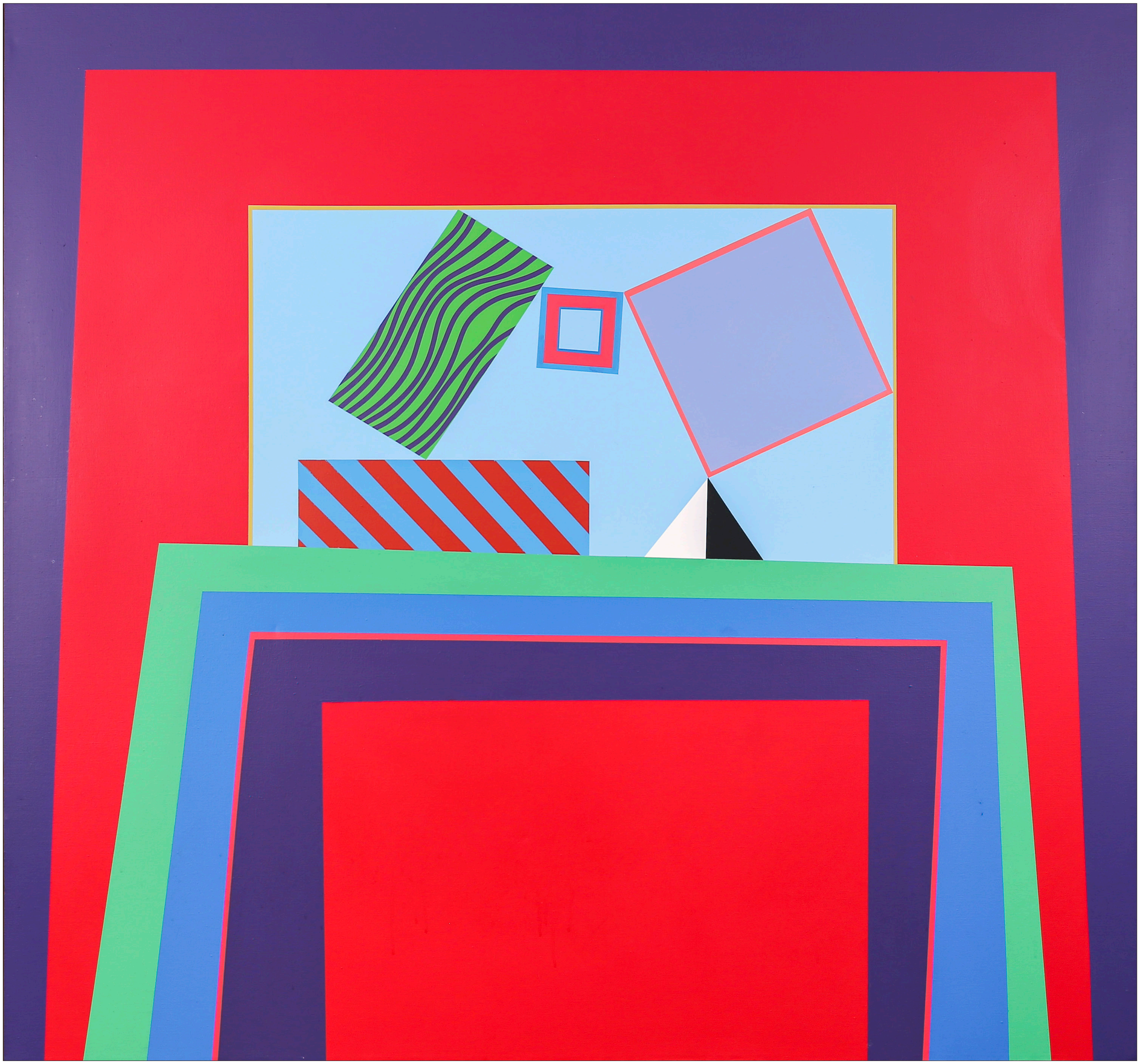


Untitled, 1999. Acrylic on canvas, 23 x 23 in.
Collection of David and Beverly Freeman.



Blue Balanced

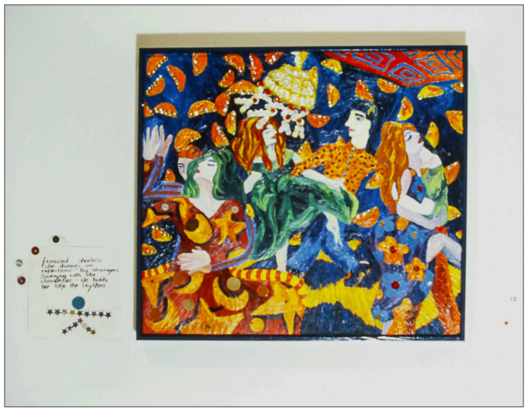
1999. Acrylic on canvas, 48.75 x 44.25 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



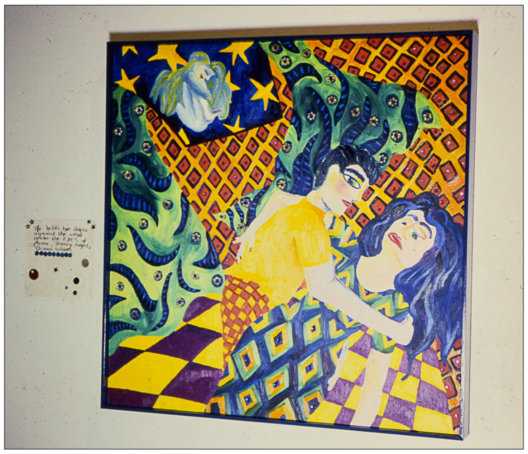
Balancing Act

1999. Acrylic on canvas, 52 x 56 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.

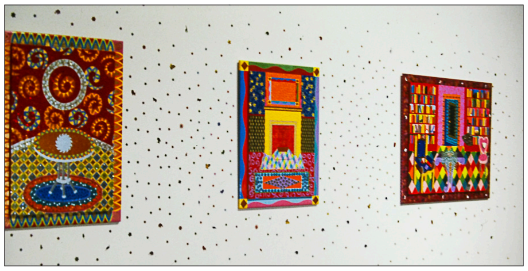
Student Work, 1990s



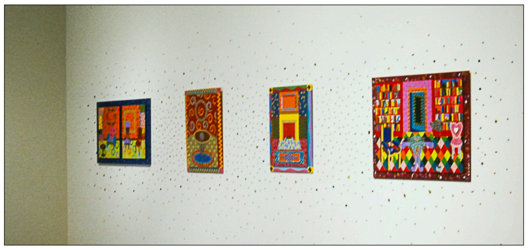
Lisa Loudon



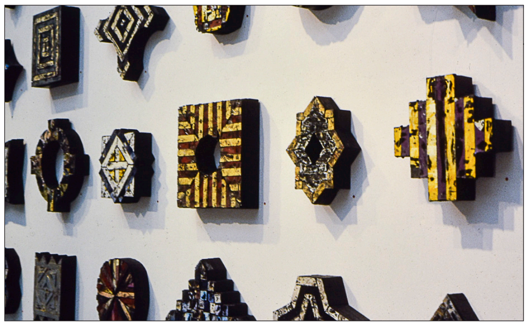
Lisa Loudon



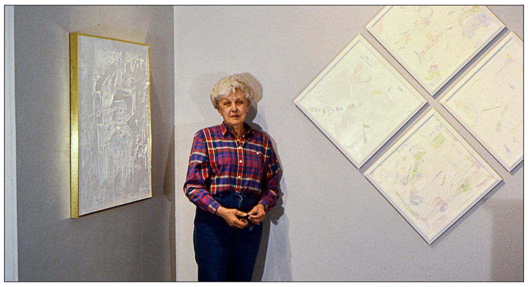
Kelly Siragusa



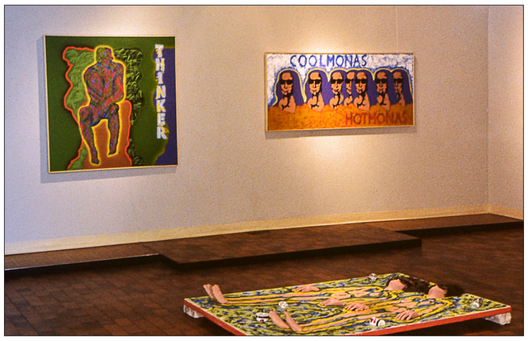
Kelly Siragusa



Randy Galaska

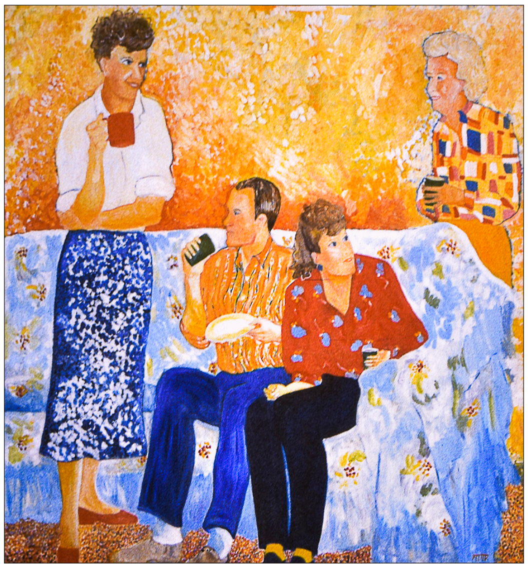


Marjorie Bachman, 1990

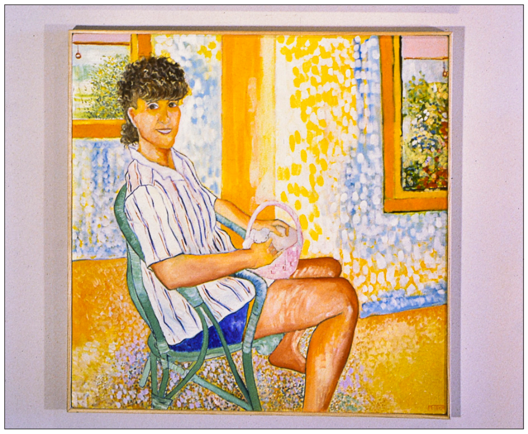

THINKER
COOLMONAS
HOTMONAS

Jerry Jablonski, 1990

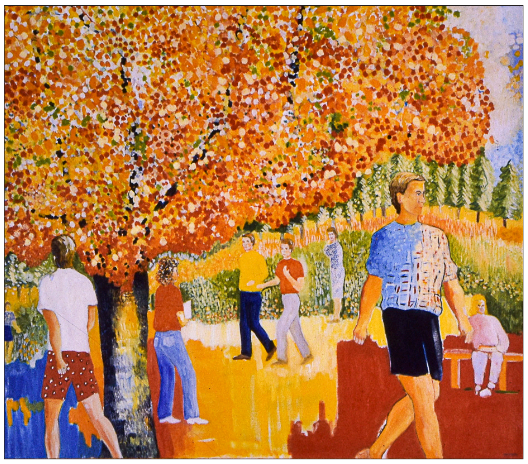
Joan Fetter, 1991



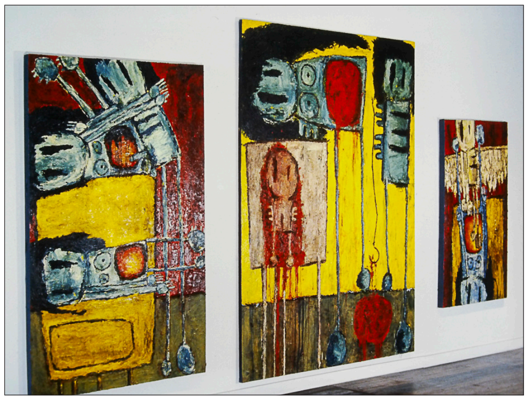
Joan Fetter, 1991



Joan Fetter, 1991

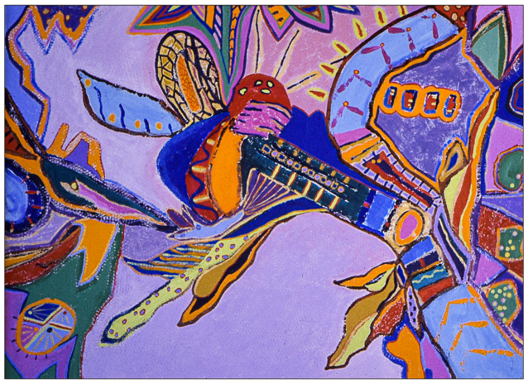


Joan Fetter, 1991

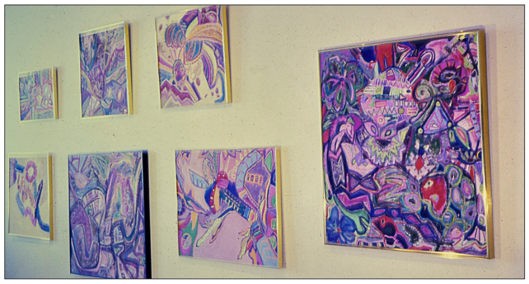


Arthur Cruz, 1991

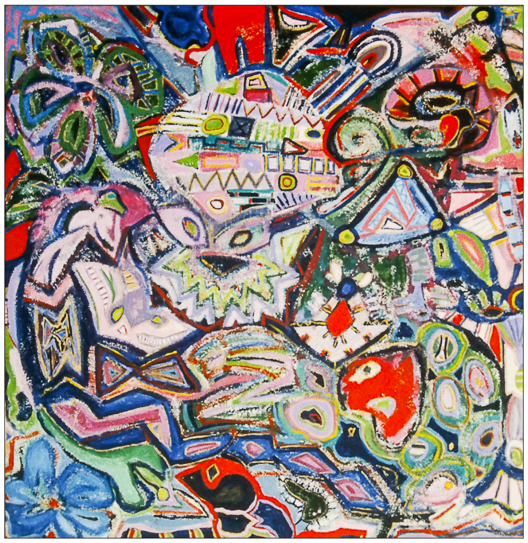
Karla Pirruccello, 1991



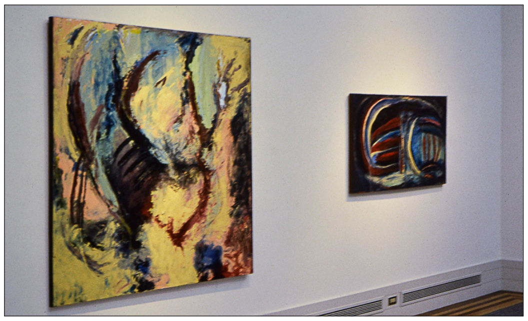
Karla Pirruccello, 1991



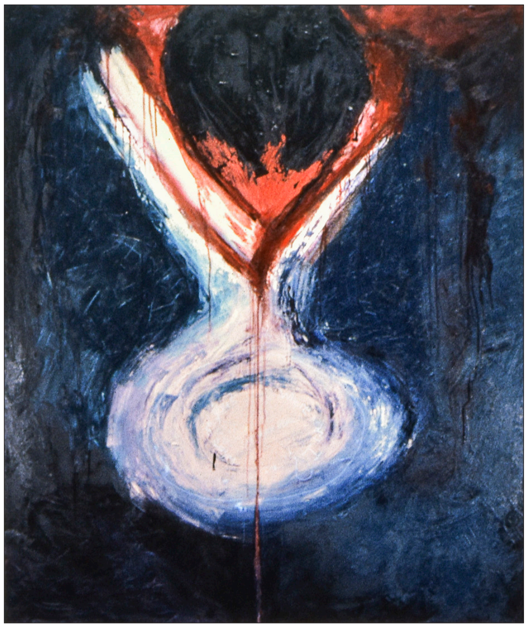
Karla Pirruccello, 1991



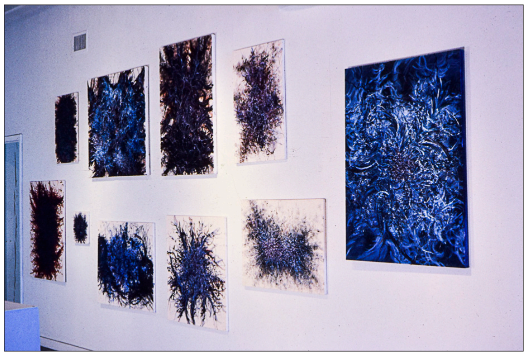
Karla Pirruccello, 1991



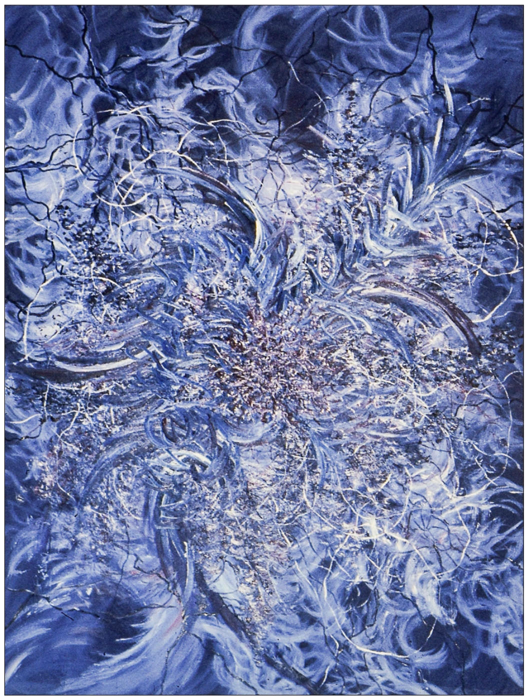
Lori Tatreau, 1993



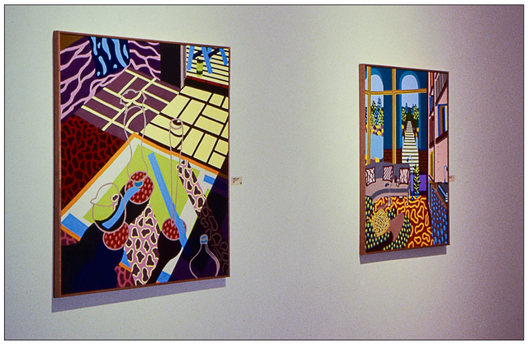
Lori Tatreau, 1993



Jade Coffman, 1991



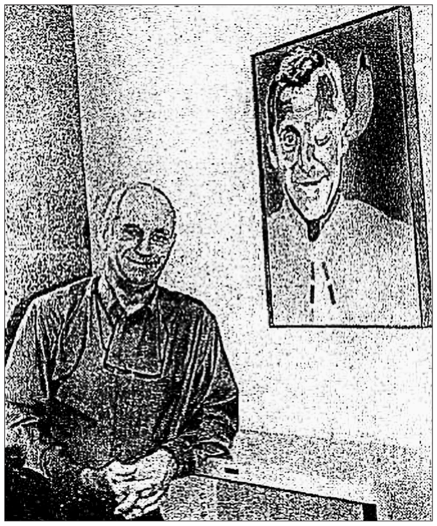
Jade Coffman, 1991



Darren Juliano, 1999

The Gateway, April 28, 2000

Professor Hill Prepares for Retirement



Peter Hill stands by a painting titled "Paint by the Numbers Peter" done by one of his students, John Rose, in 1975.

After 42 years of teaching at UNO, Professor Peter Hill is finishing his last semester.

Hill, a Detroit native, began teaching art and art history here in 1958. He came to UNO straight out of graduate school. Hill received his master's of fine arts from the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan and came to Omaha for the job.

"Jobs were just as hard to find then as they are today," Hill said.

He never thought he would stay at UNO permanently.

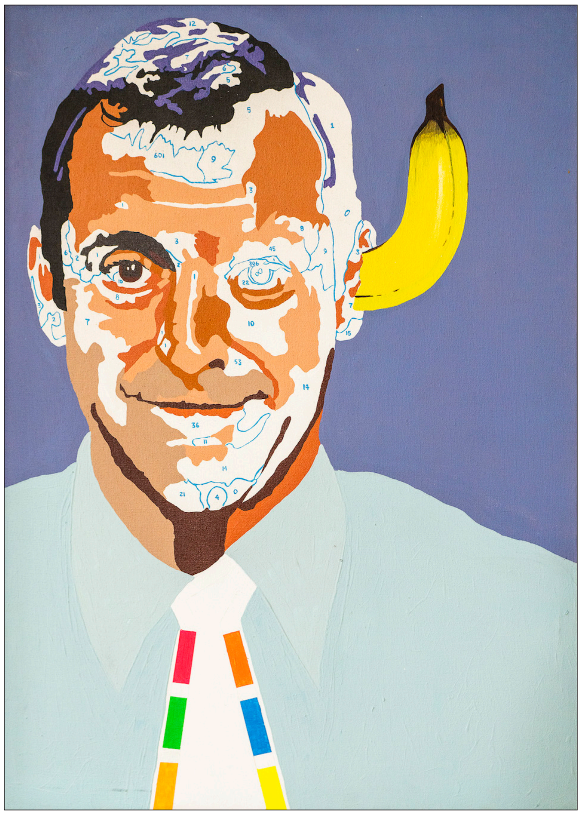
"I thought I might leave after five years," he said. "Then I thought I might leave after 10 years. But 10 years came and I was still here." At 20 years, Hill decided he was not going anywhere.

"Once you're an associate professor, you usually don't go anywhere."

Over the years, Hill has seen UNO evolve, but he consistently likes to teach the same classes. Namely, beginning drawing and beginning painting. These are classes with no prerequisites so they are usually students' first experience in the art world.

"Students are a little green," Hill said. "But they work hard."

He recalls a time in the early 1960s when things got a little crazy in his life drawing class. Chancellor Milo Bail was a little upset that students were taking a break from class and smoking outside. The break was for the model who posed for drawings in the class, but students used this time go have a cigarette. This upset the chancellor and he burst into Hill's life-drawing class just a few minutes after the model had dropped her robe.



John Rose. *Paint by the Numbers Peter*, 1975. Acrylic on canvas. Collection of Alex Freeman.

"He talked around her," Hill said.

He said Bail would not look at the nude model.

Hill also recalls some controversy over the use of the nude model.

"The chancellor thought the model should at least have on a G-string," he said. This sparked a joke that the home-ec department should have a contest to design the model's G-string.

Professor Hill now looks forward to his retirement. "It gets harder and harder to go back to school," he said. "This semester it was really tough." Teaching half-time for the past seven years, he said, made it a little harder to come back one last semester.

In the future, he plans to paint and draw pictures, but has no big plans for retirement.

"I'll try to spend all my money."

"Retirement": 2000 to 2018

Don't let the scare quotes around the word "retirement" mislead you. It *was* a retirement. After 2000 he never taught again. But just because he ceased his vocation doesn't mean he suspended his practice. Only in Canada did he not make art; while in Omaha, he kept on painting. What else could he do? He was an artist, and artists have to, well, art.

In addition to painting, he and Jody (and Lindsey Freeman's family, and Mary Achelpohl's family) traveled. When I was younger, it struck me odd that my father had never been to Europe. That's where much of the Western tradition was on exhibit, including the roots of Modernism. Abstract Expressionism might have been birthed largely by Americans, but the same can't be said for Cubism, Fauvism, de Stijl, Constructivism . . . you get my point. Why hadn't he visited the Old World as a young man?

One reason, obviously, is that museums in the United States have some great stuff. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a handful of Americans became filthy rich, and one way to dignify that money and ennoble one's self is to buy art and fund museums. So of course Dad visited the Detroit Institute of Arts, the New York Museum of Modern Art, the Frick Museums, the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., etc. America had a lot to meet his needs.

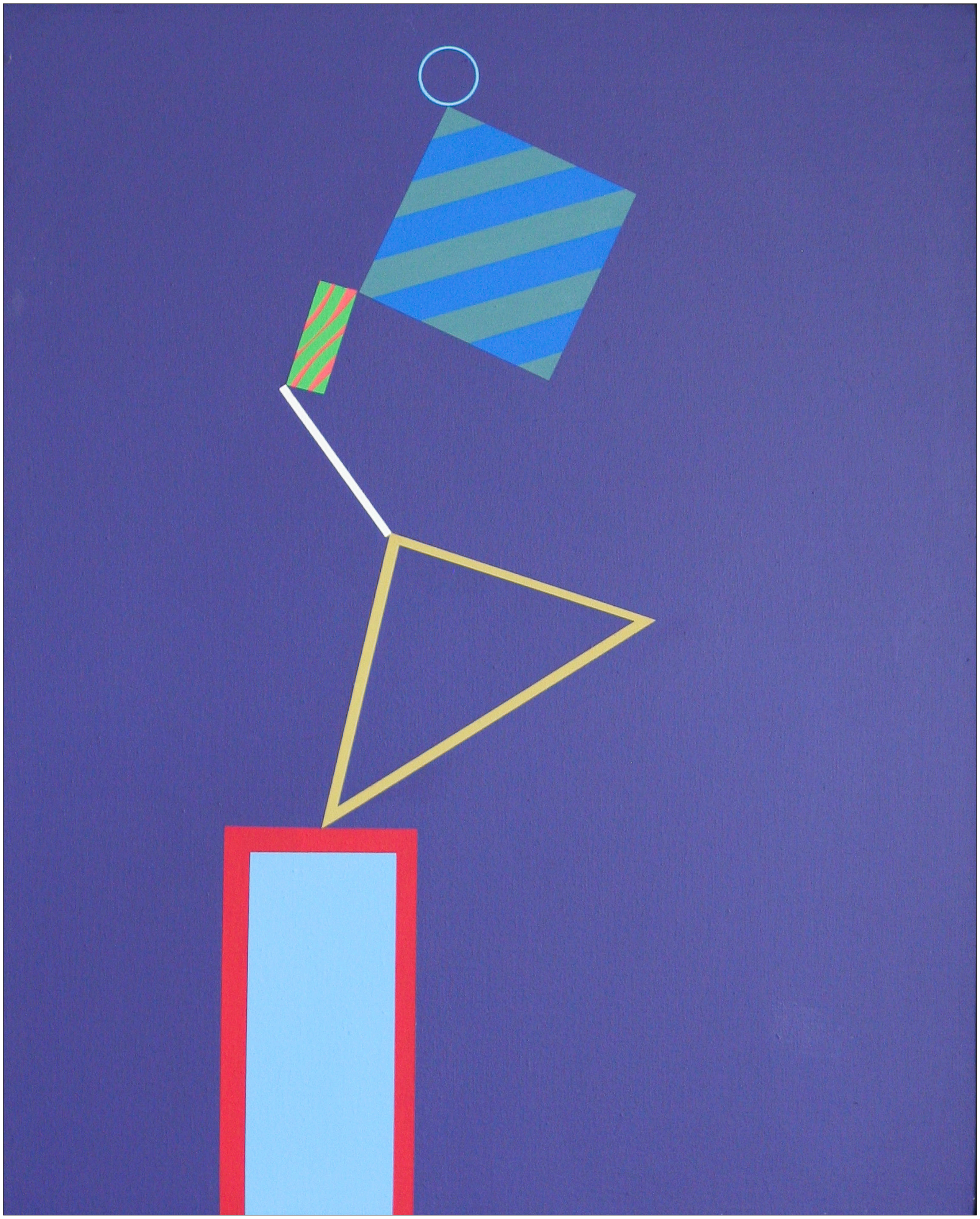
But the United States is not and will never be Europe: the Louvre and Orsay (Paris), the Hermitage (St. Petersburg), the National Gallery (London), the Uffizi and Bargello (Florence), the Vatican (Rome), the Reichsmuseum (Amsterdam), etc. How could a practicing artist and professor of art history not get there at least once during the prime of his life?

As I got older, I figured it out. My folks were sensible. They had a bunch of children (and a couple of dogs) to care for. Travel was expensive. They had a cabin in Canada. Money went for necessities and modest luxuries; Europe could wait.

Once they were done waiting, they went:

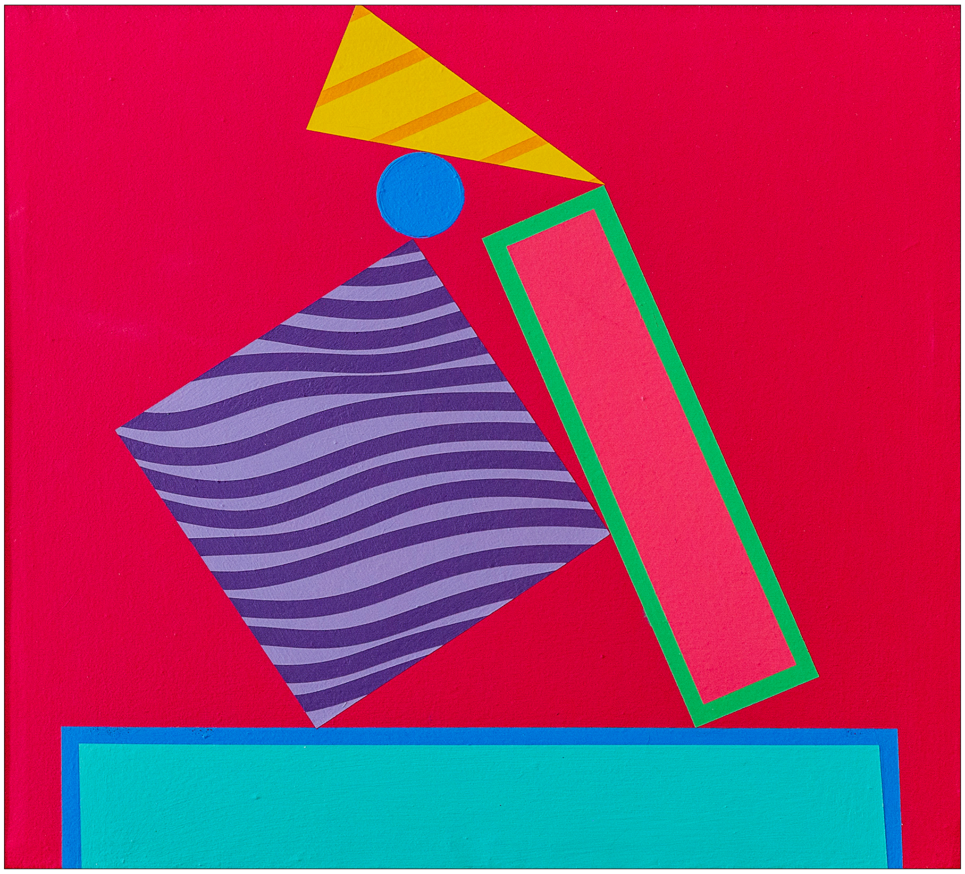
- **May 2007:** France (wine country and Paris)
- **June 2008:** Spain (Madrid, Seville, Barcelona)
- **October 2008:** Italy (Rome, Florence, Venice)
- **May/June 2010:** Austria (Salzburg, Vienna), Germany (Munich), Czech Republic (Prague)
- **June 2012:** Ireland (Dublin, Kilkenny, County Meath, Dingle)
- **June 2013:** Italy (Tuscany, Lucca)
- **May 2014:** London and Scotland
- **May 2015:** Holland (Amsterdam) and Belgium (Brussels and Bruges)
- **March 2016:** Germany (Berlin, Munich, Bavaria)
- **June 2017:** Denmark (Copenhagen)
- **June 2018:** Denmark, Germany, and Russia

A moral might be: Good things come to those who wait. Assuming you live long enough—which he did.

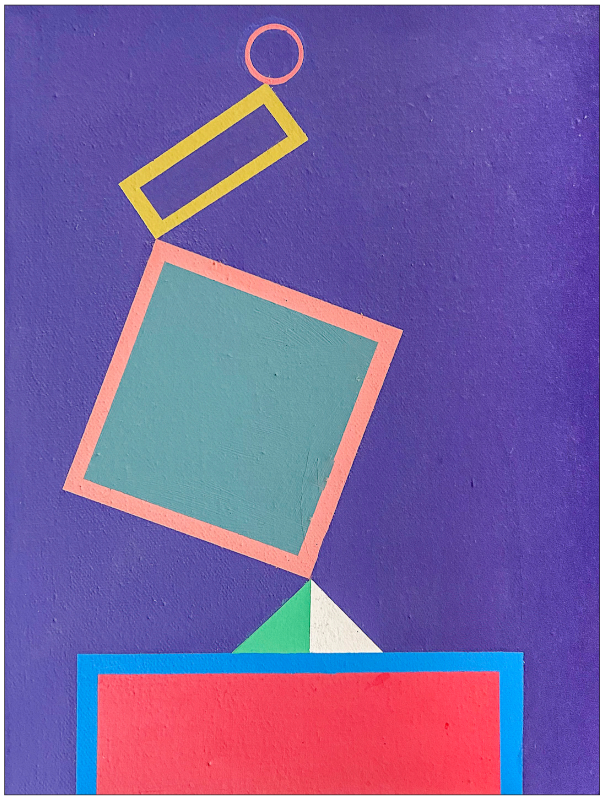


Hang Up

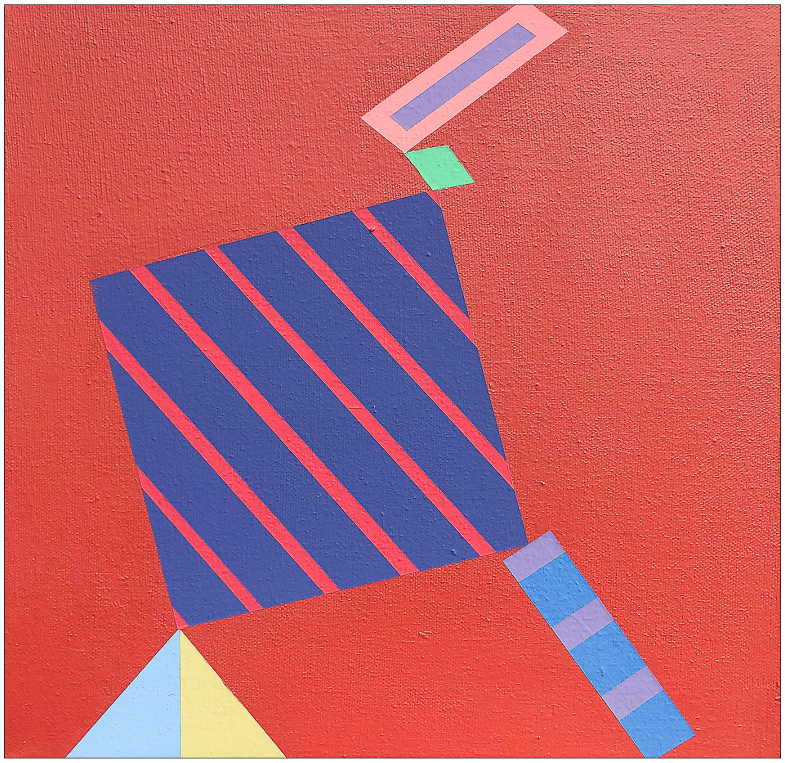
2000. Acrylic on canvas, 27 x 22 in.
Collection of Steve and Annette Huff. Photograph by Alec Paul.



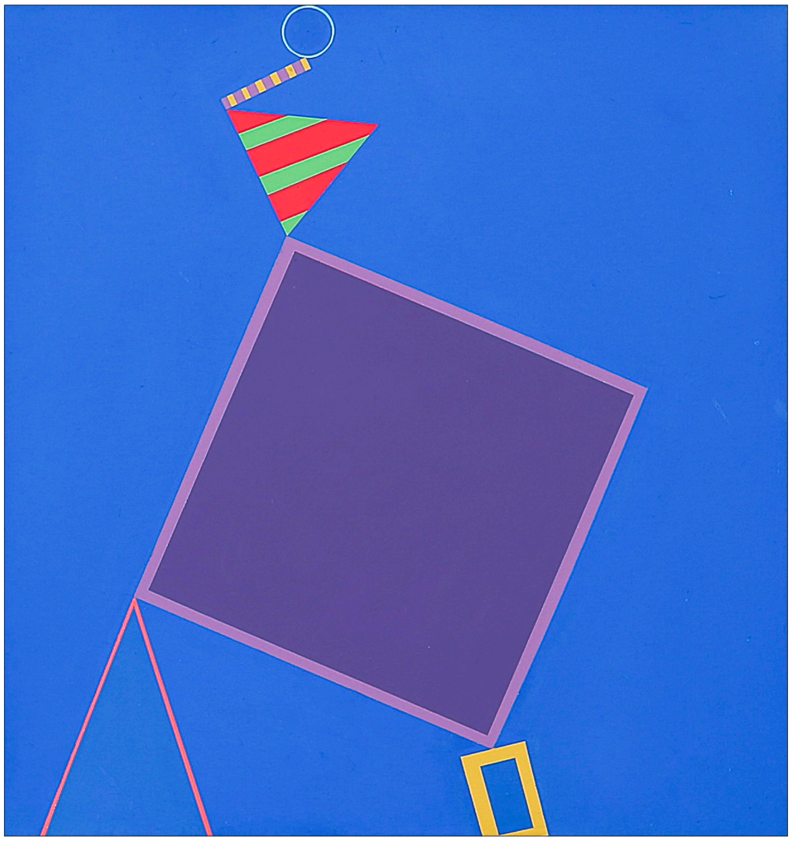
Untitled, 2003. Acrylic on canvas, 12 x 12 in.
Collection of Beverly Young.



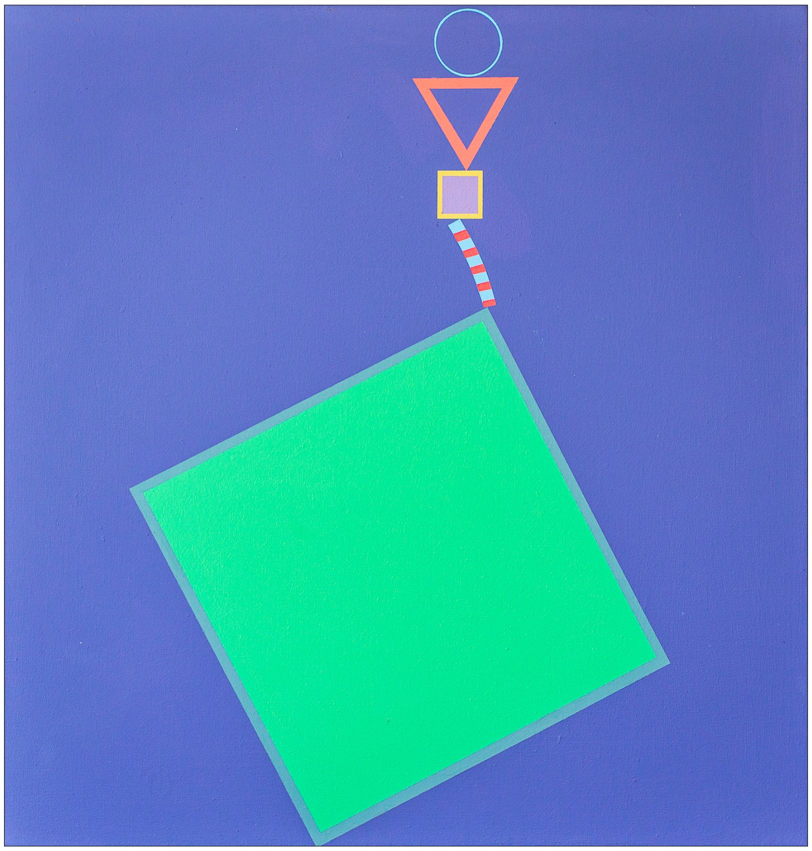
Untitled, 2000. Acrylic on canvas, 11 x 8 in.
Collection of Michael Rock.



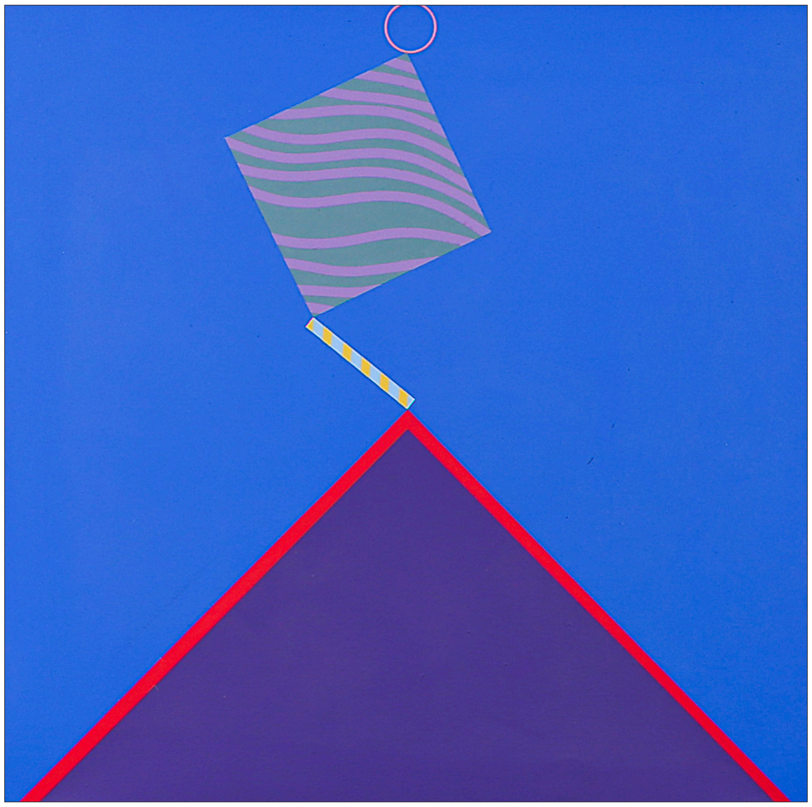
Untitled, 2000. Acrylic on canvas, 10.5 x 11 in.
Collection of Jim Butler.



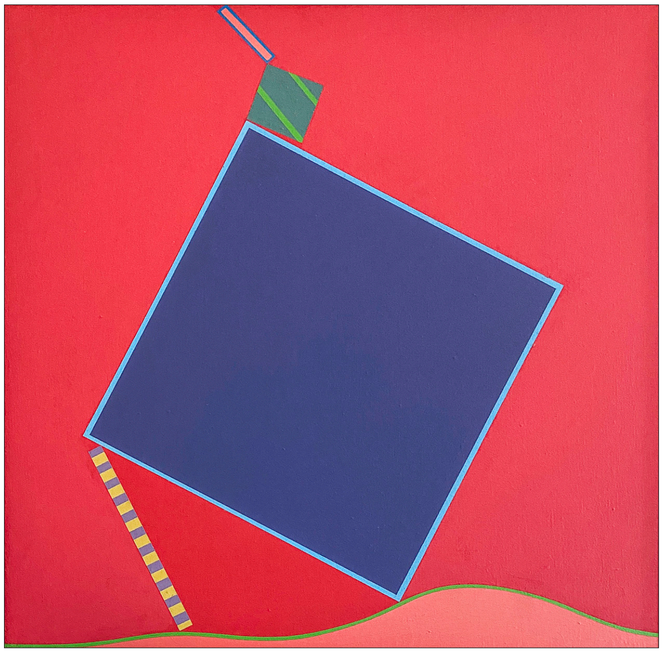
Untitled, 2000. Acrylic on canvas, 21 x 20 in.
Collection of Stephen and Leslie Hill.



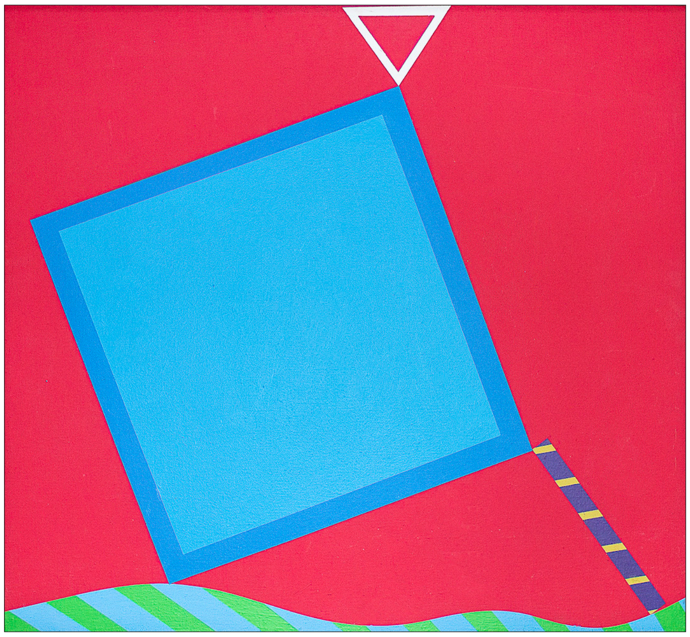
Untitled, 2000. Acrylic on canvas, 22 x 21 in.
Collection of Kristin and Greg Janisch.



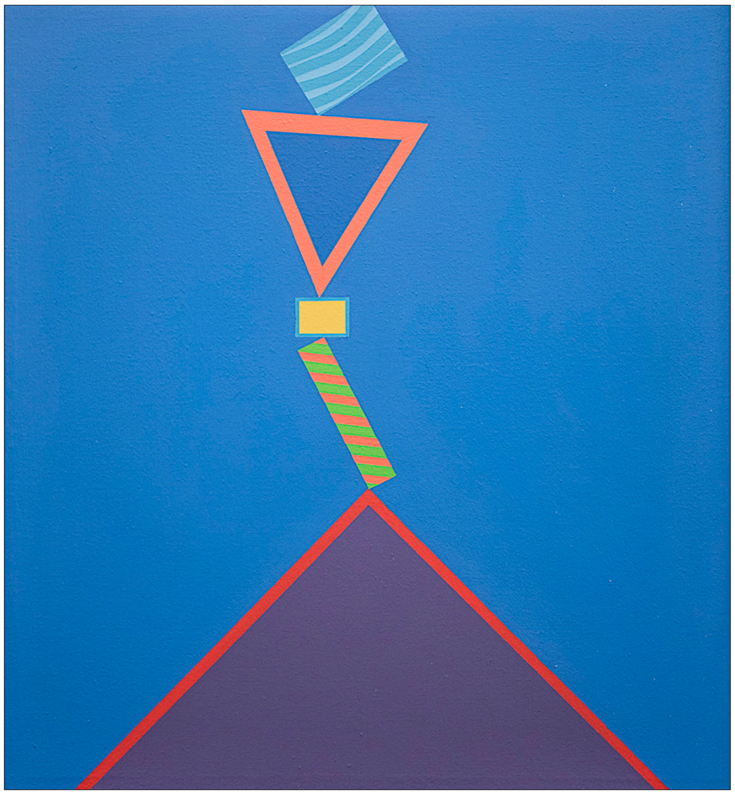
Untitled, 2000. Acrylic on canvas, 21 x 21.75 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



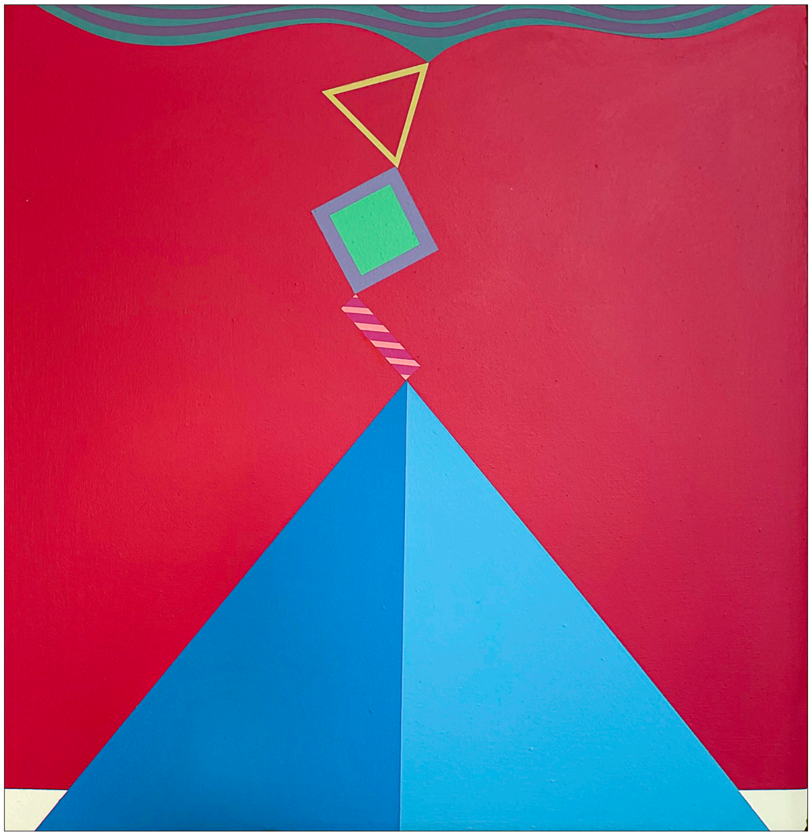
Untitled, 2000. Acrylic on canvas, 17 x 16.5 in.
Collection of Gina and Terry Mitchell.



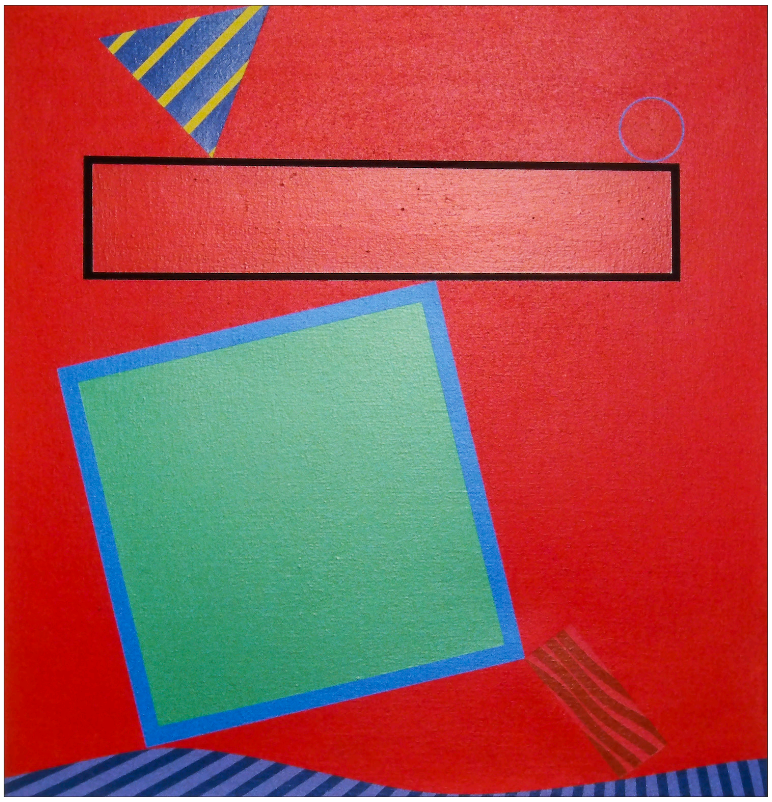
Untitled, 2000. Acrylic on canvas, 17 x 18.5 in.
Collection of Raechel and Gino Meyer.



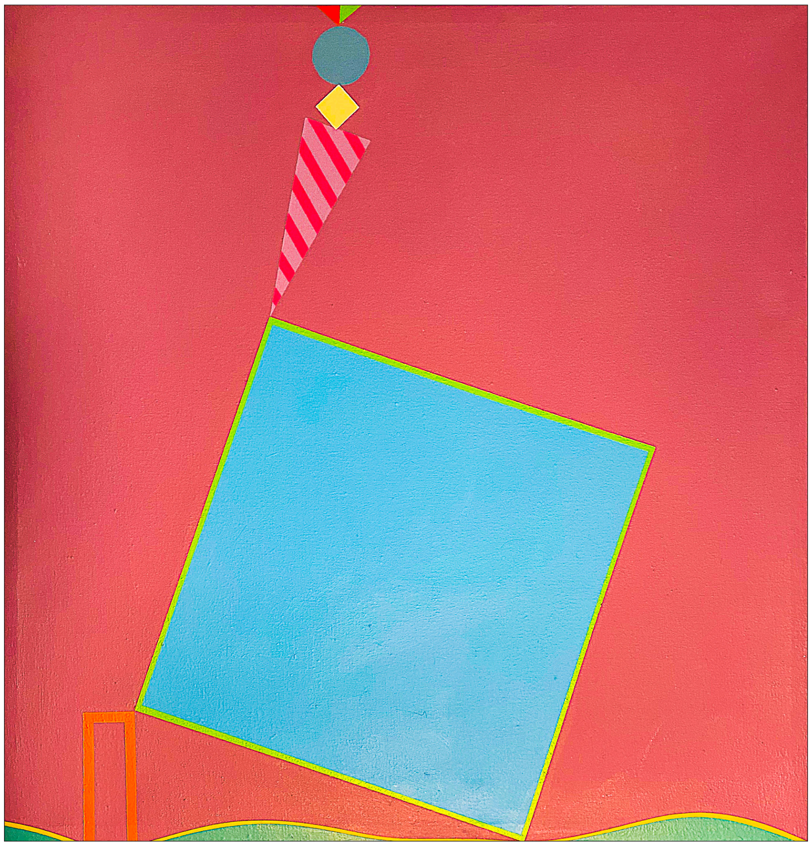
Formal Balance, 2000. Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 18 in.



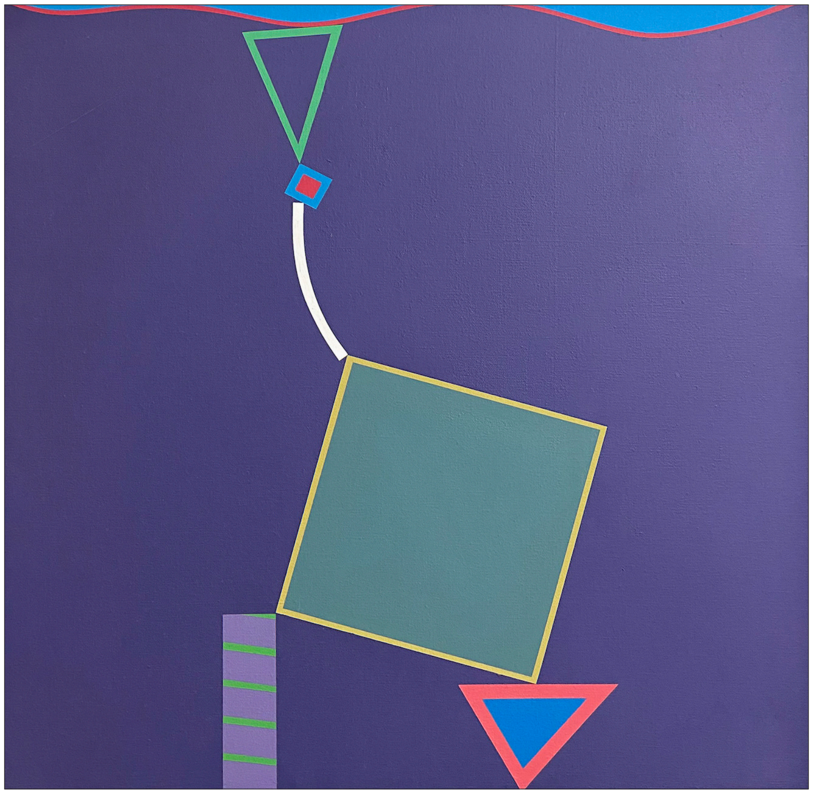
Untitled, 2002. Acrylic on canvas, 22.5 x 22 in.
Collection of the Rock family.



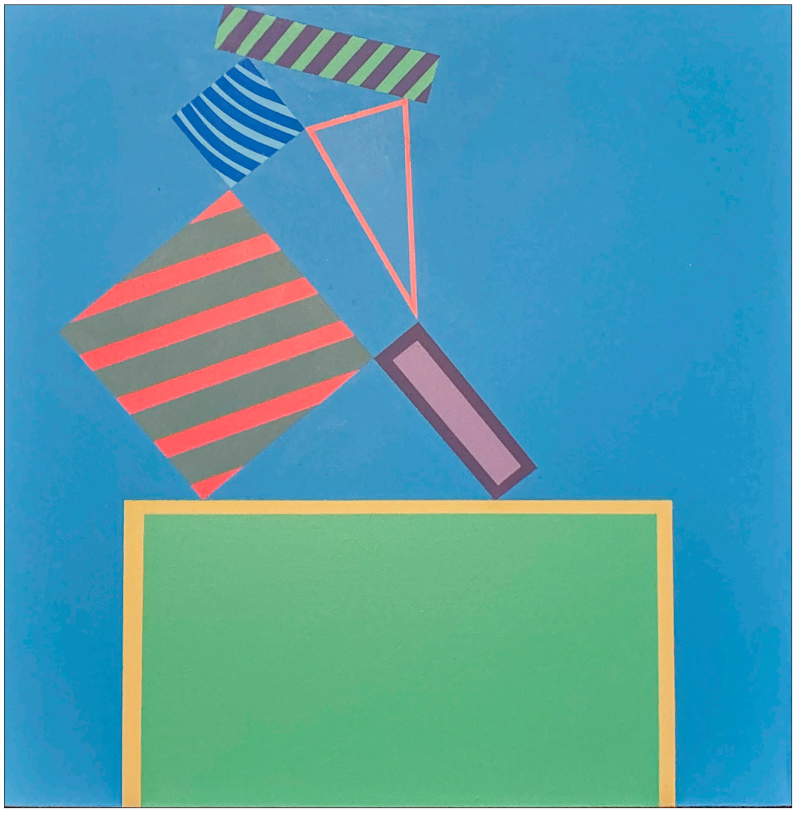
Untitled, 2000. Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 20 in.



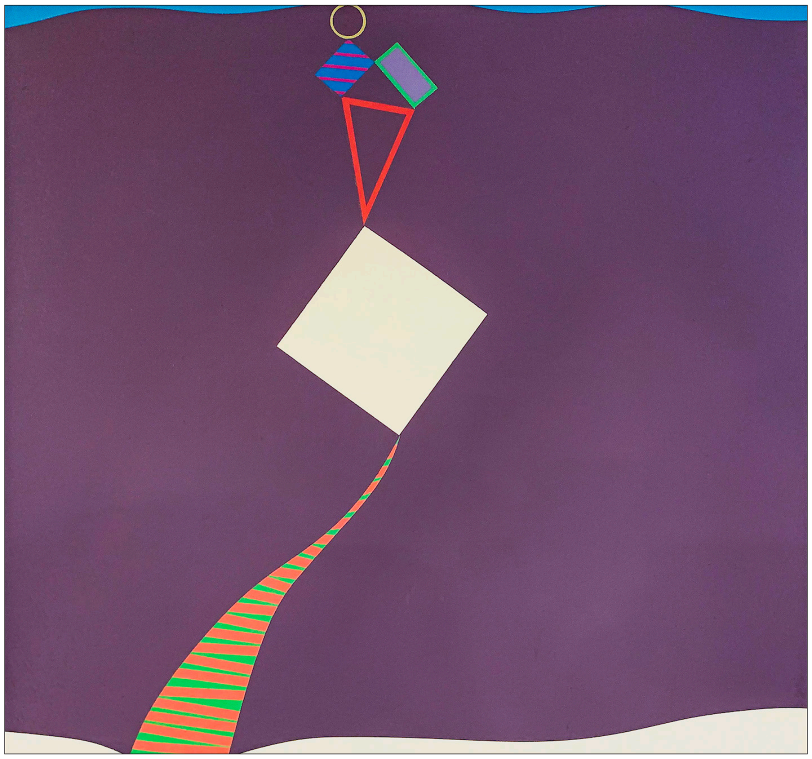
Untitled, 2002. Acrylic on canvas.
Collection of Abby Richards.



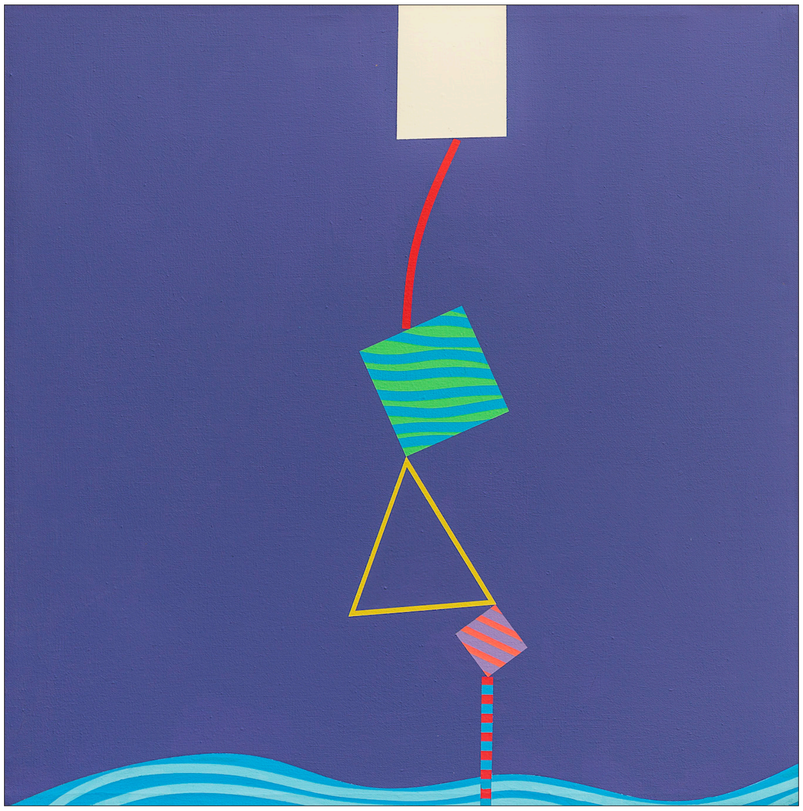
Untitled, 2001. Acrylic on canvas, 21.5 x 21.5 in.
Collection of Shelley Kiel.



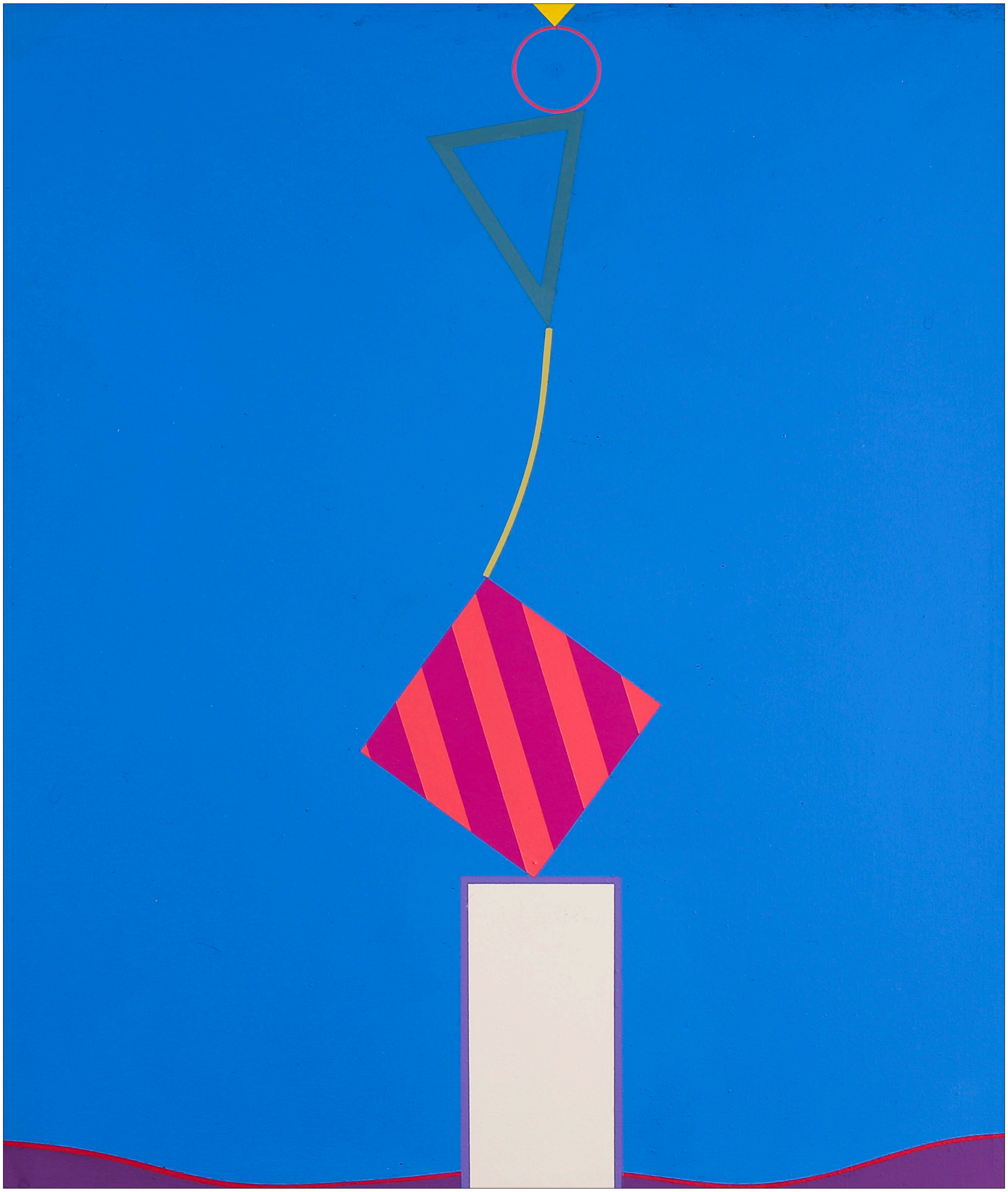
Enclosed Blue Spaces, 2001. Acrylic, 18.5 x 18.25 in.
Collection of Jerry Weber.



Nice Balance, 2002. Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 21.5 in.
Collection of Emilie George.

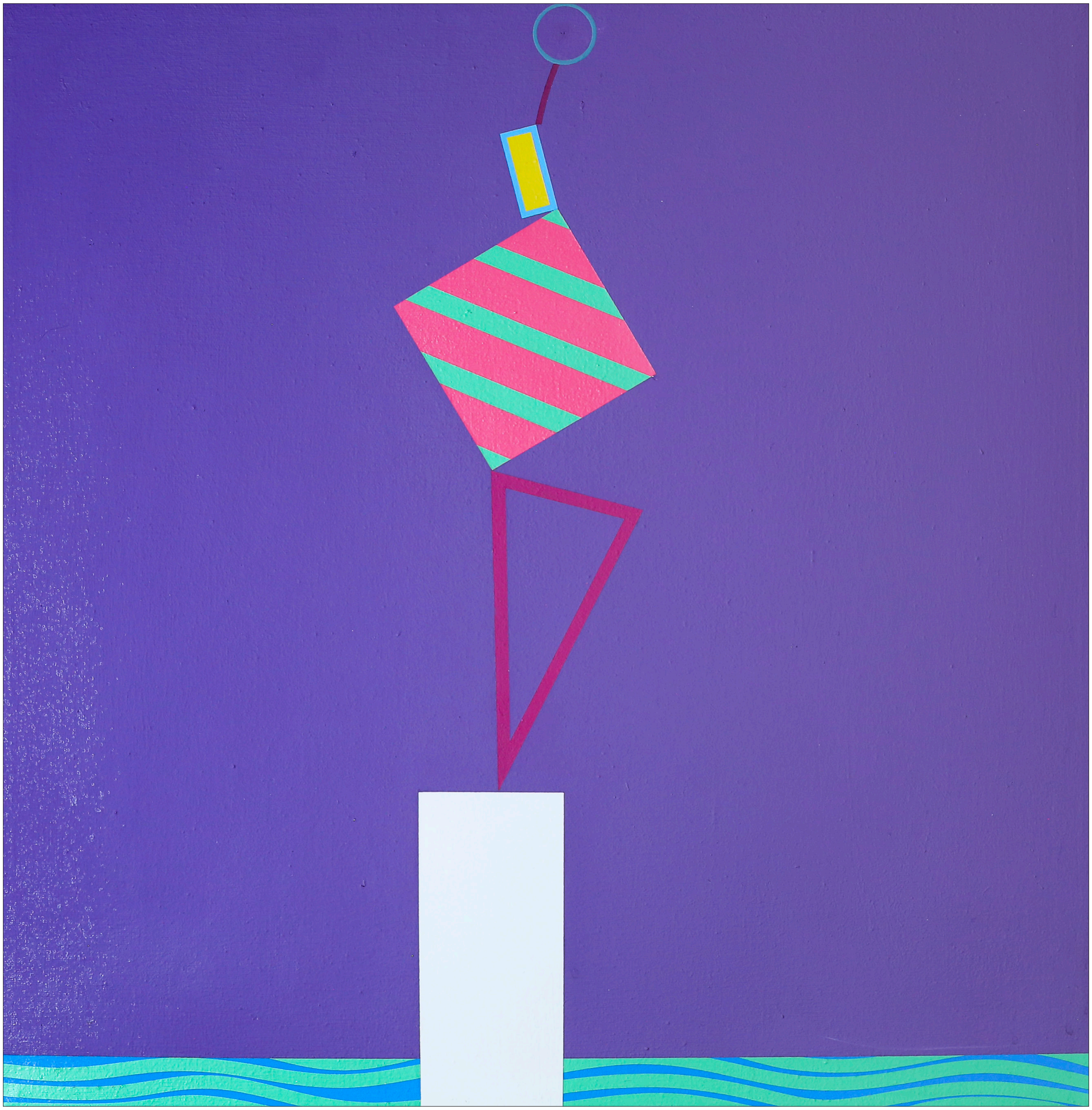


Wave, 2002. Acrylic on canvas, 21.75 x 20.75 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.



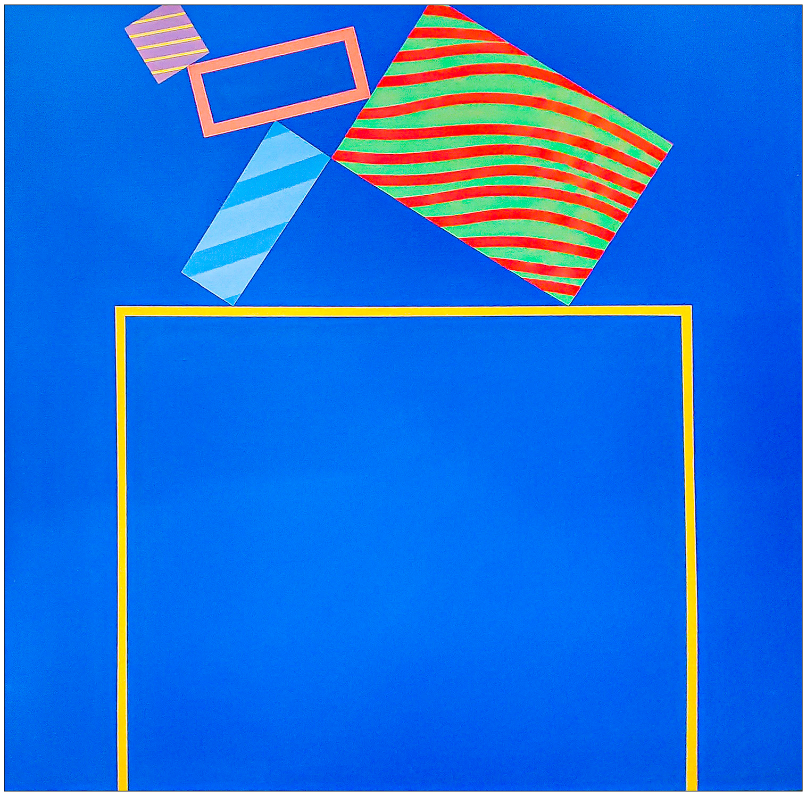
Thin Yellow Line

2002. Acrylic on canvas, 22 x 15 in.
Collection of Meghan Freeman and Evan Porter.

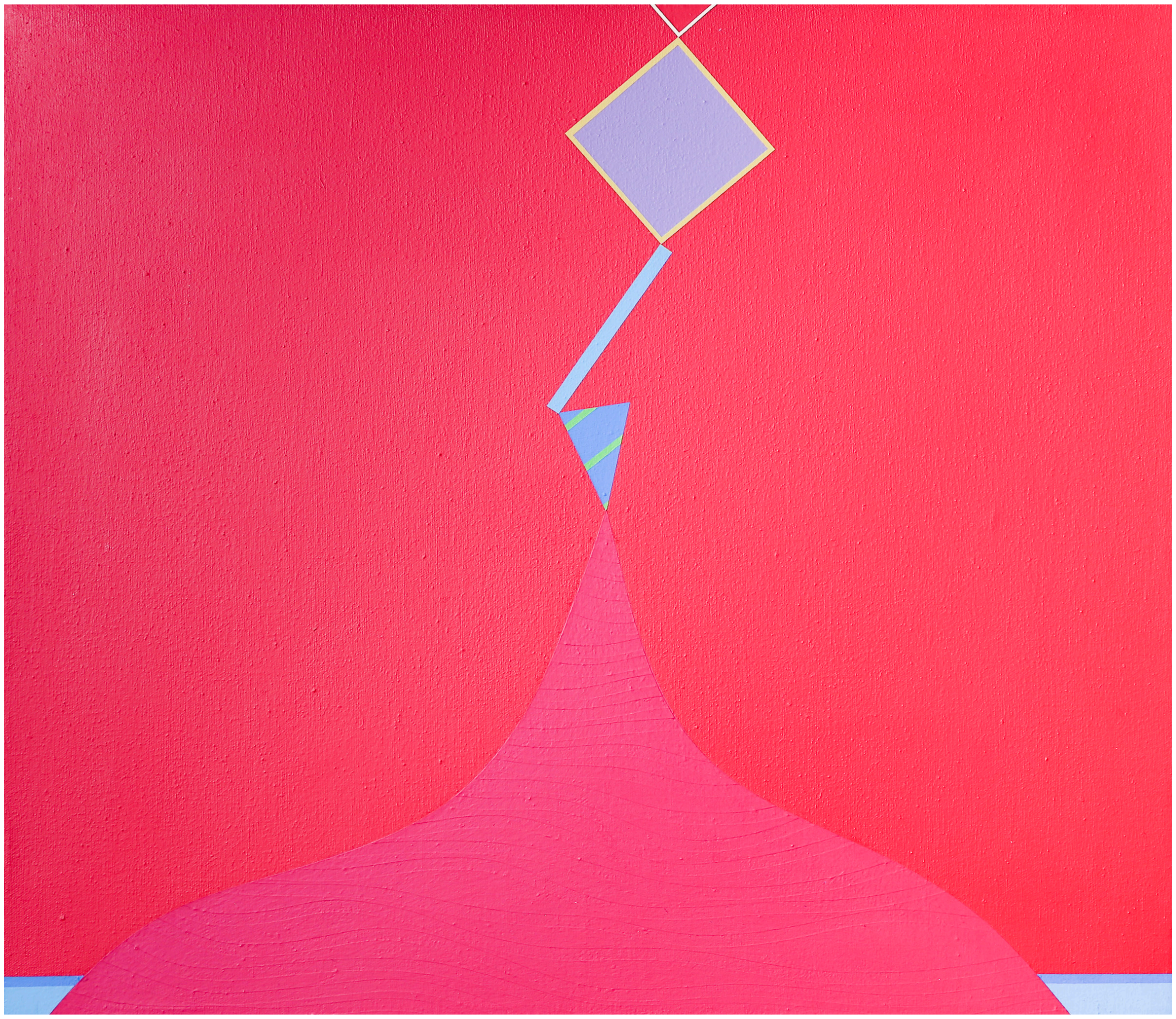


Three and One-half Inch

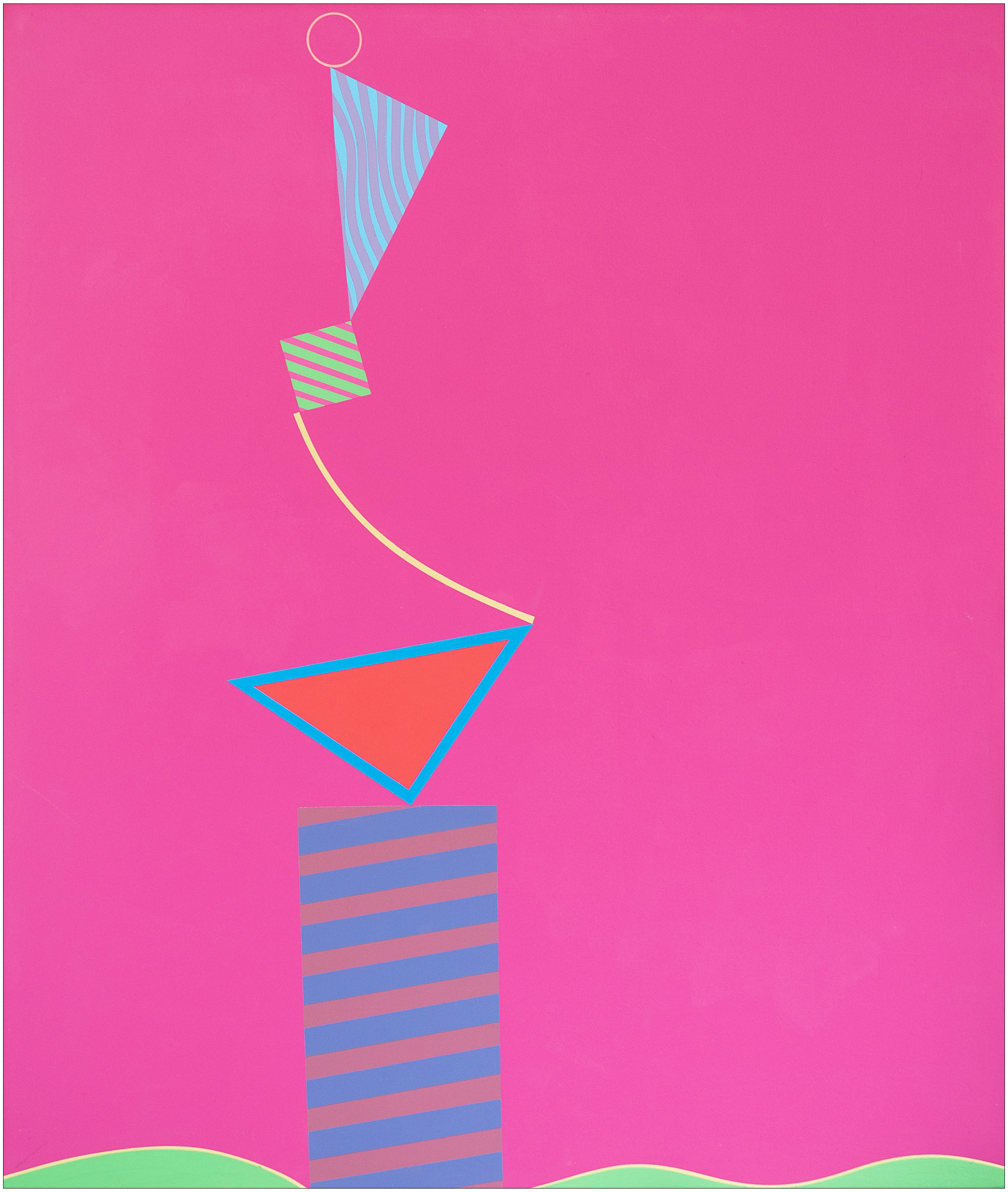
2002. Acrylic on canvas, 20.5 x 20.5 in.
Collection of Joan C. Hill.



Rectangular Still Life, 2001. Acrylic on canvas, 19 x 19 in.
Collection of Chuck and Kathy Campbell.

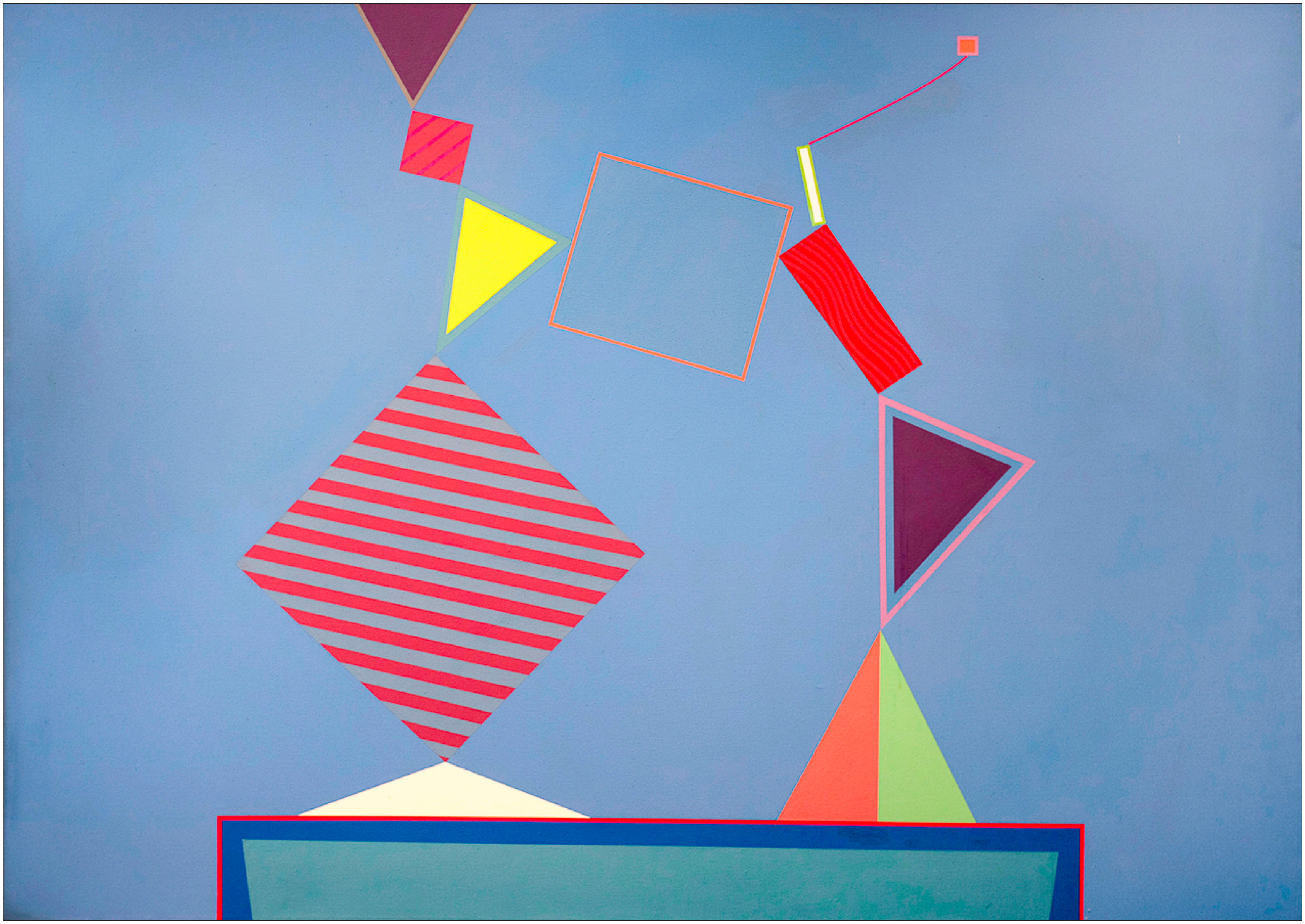


Three-Inch Square, 2002.
Acrylic on canvas, 21.5 x 24.75 in.
Collection of Michael Tegland.



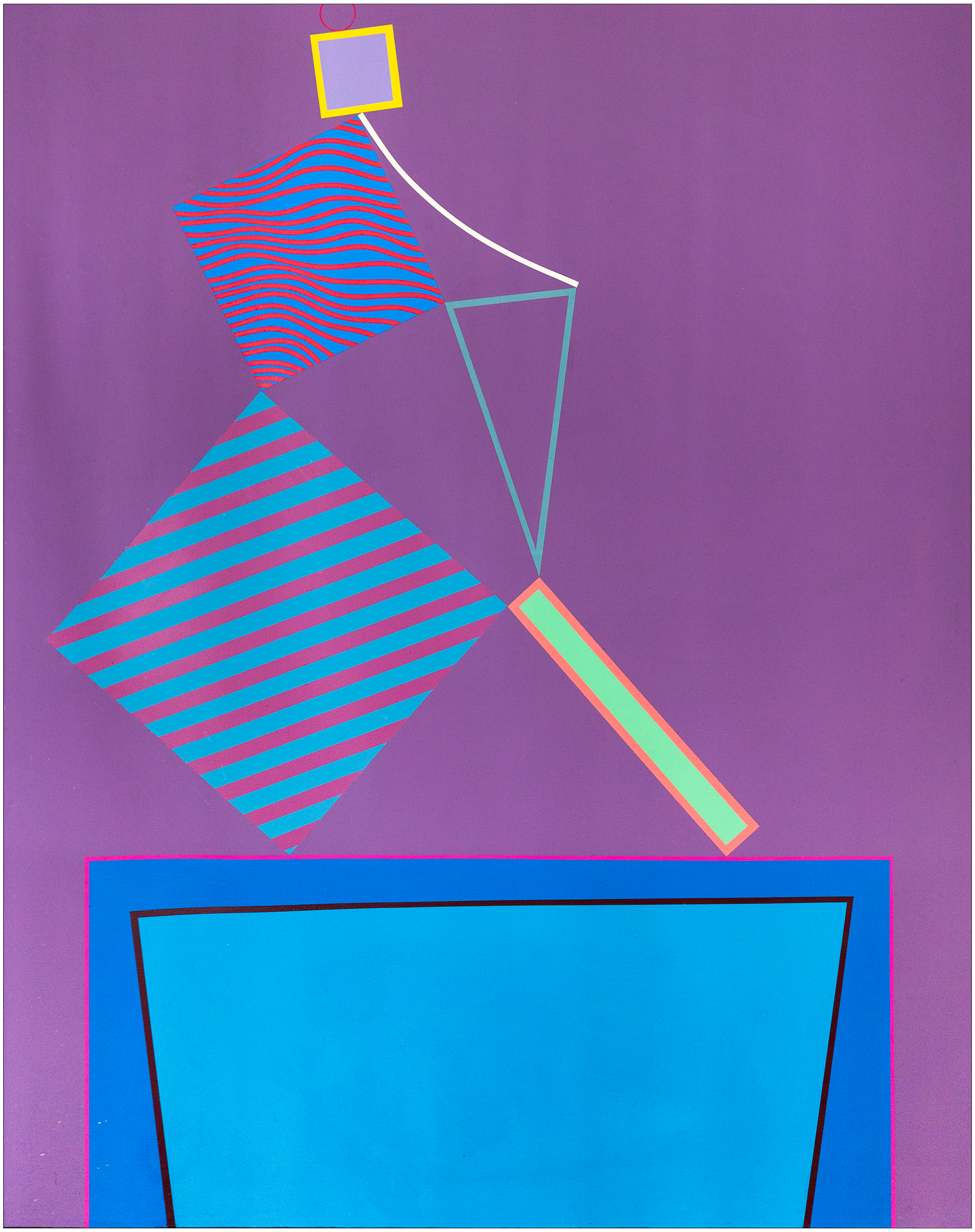
Orange Circle

2002. Acrylic on canvas, 32 x 22.5 in.
Collection of Jody Page.



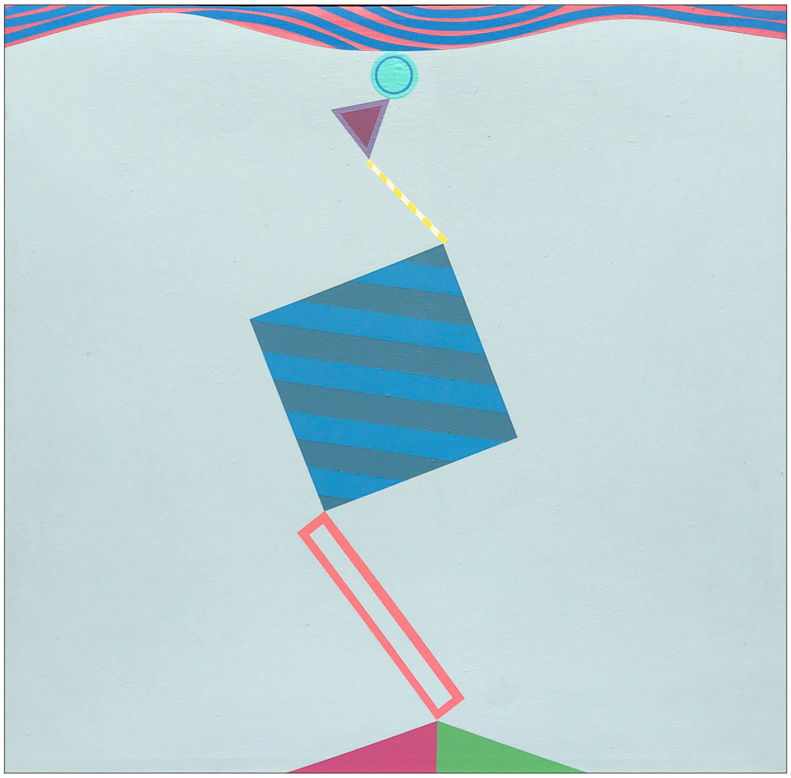
Informal Still Life

2002. Acrylic on canvas, 51.75 x 72 in.

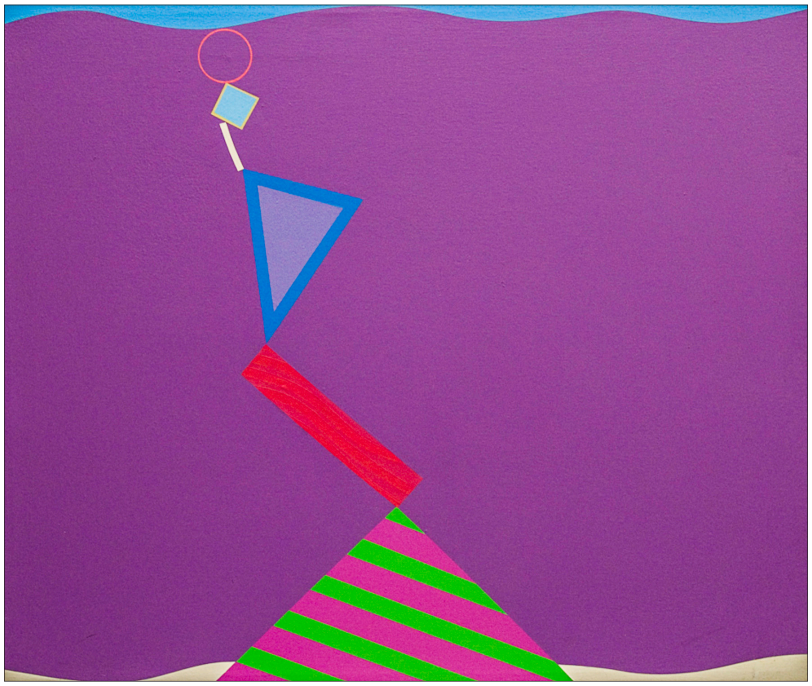


Untitled

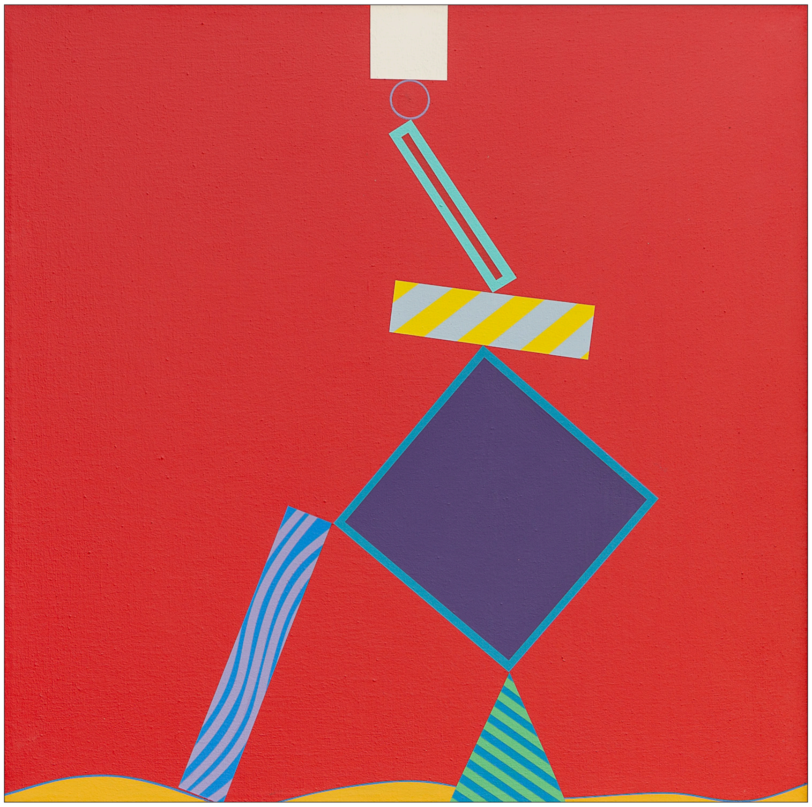
2002. Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48 in.
Collection of Katy and Jon Welles.



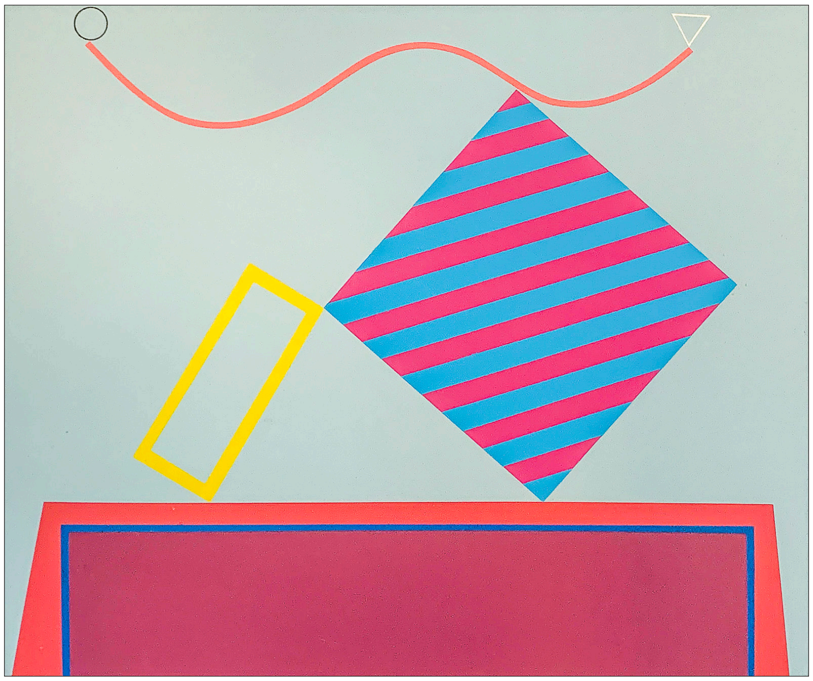
Untitled, 2003. Acrylic on canvas, 23 x 23 in.
Collection of Cindy and Steve Forehead.



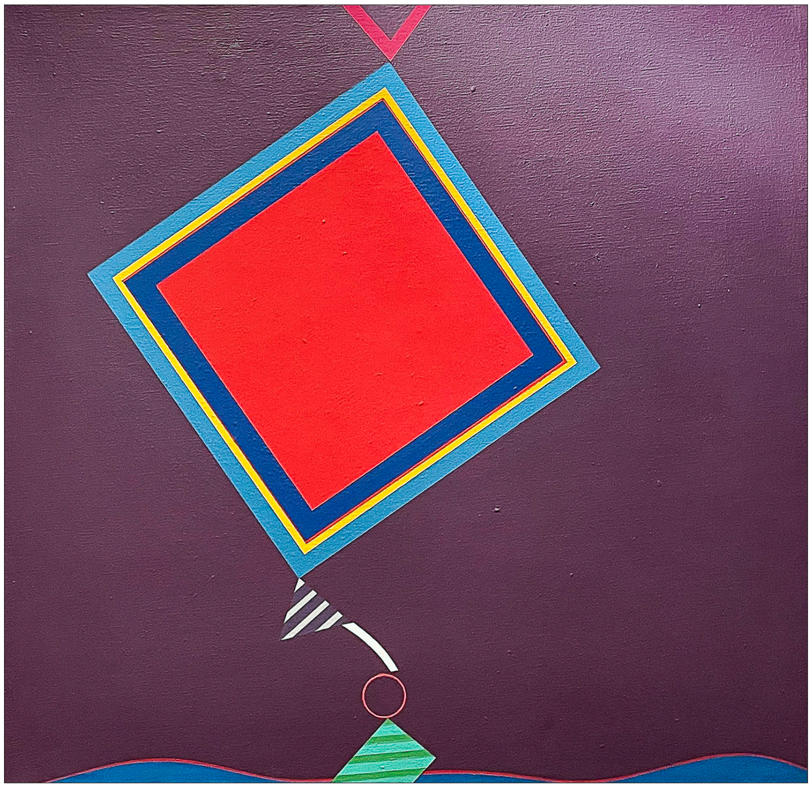
One-Inch Square, 2002.
Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 24 in.



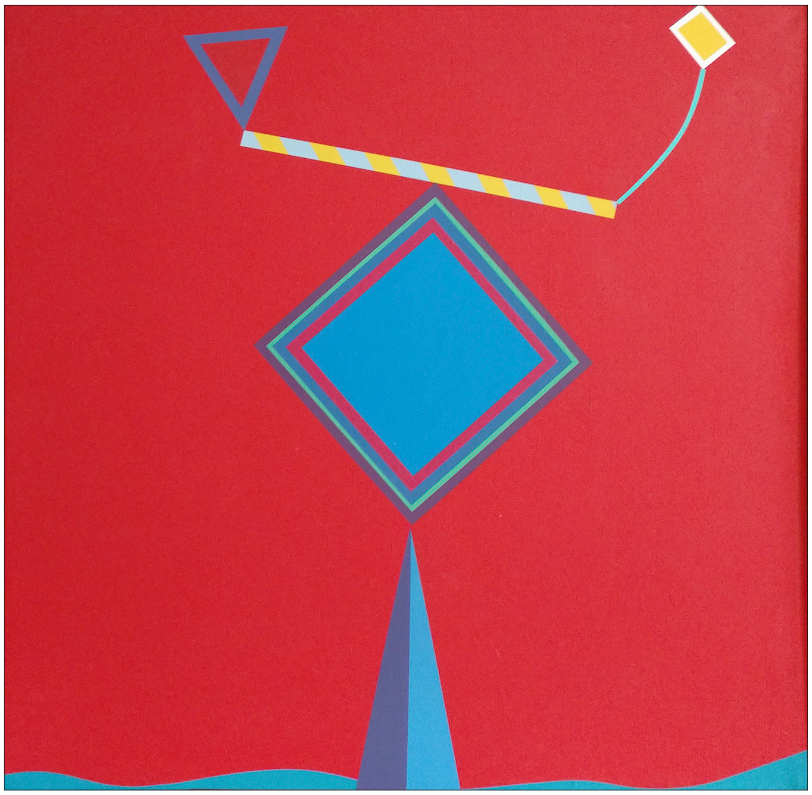
Untitled, 2003. Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.



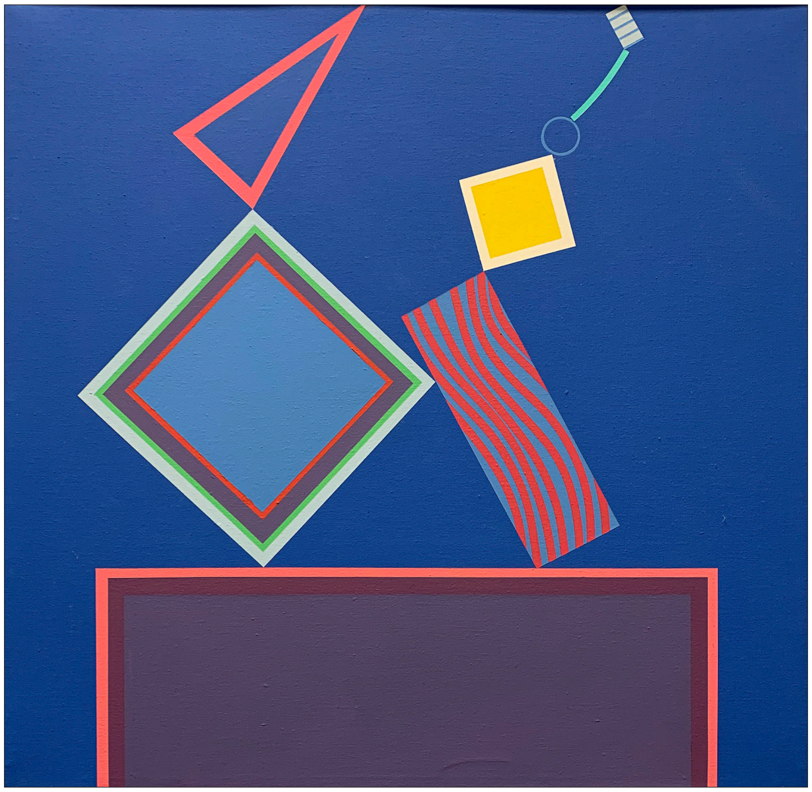
Balanced Gift, 2003. Acrylic on canvas, 23 x 27.75 in.
Collection of Todd ("T. J") and Shanna Freeman.



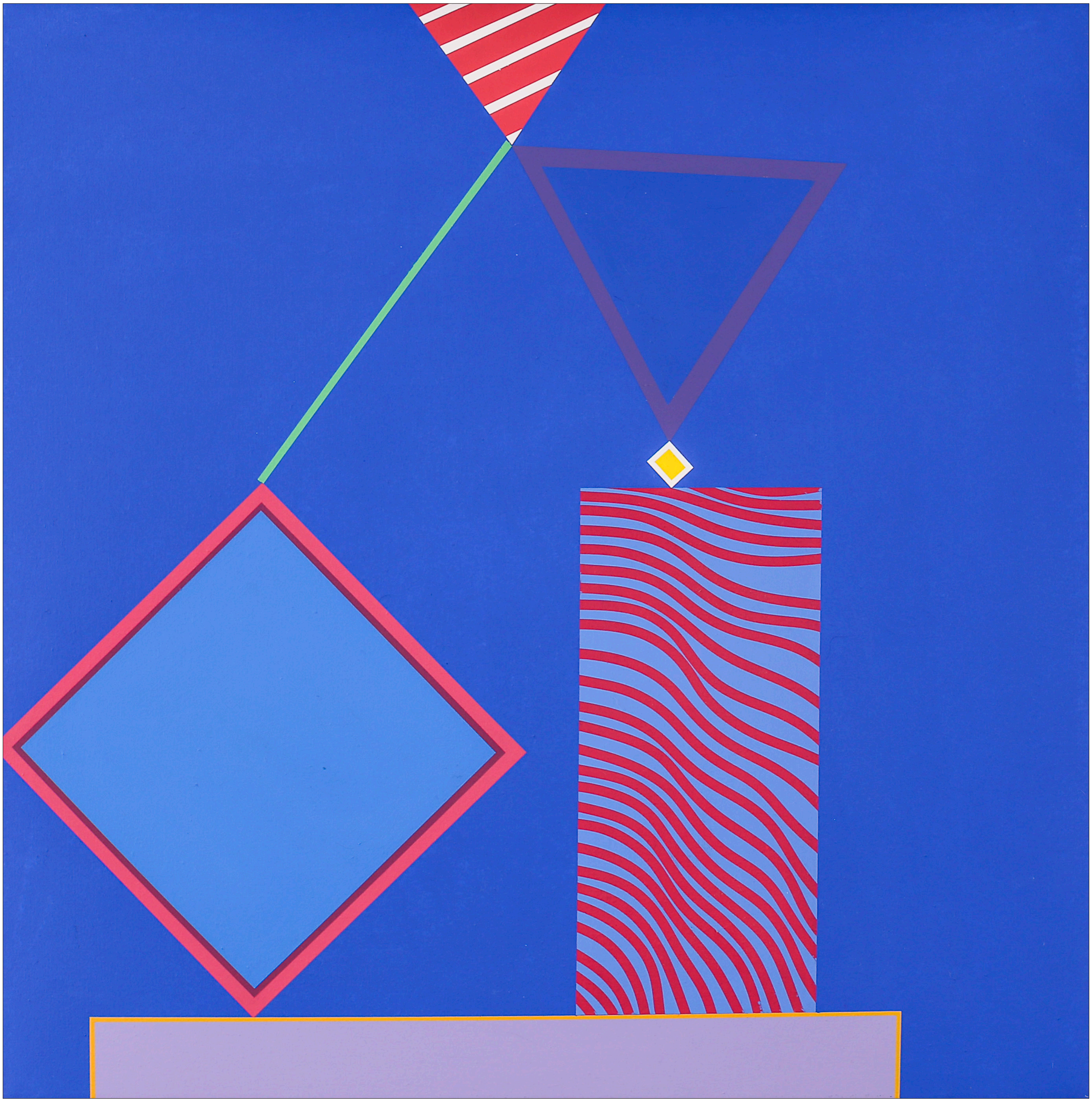
Untitled, 2004. Acrylic on canvas.
Collection of Chris Lind.



Untitled, 2004. Acrylic on canvas, 29 x 28 in.
Collection of Doug and Cyndi Parrott.

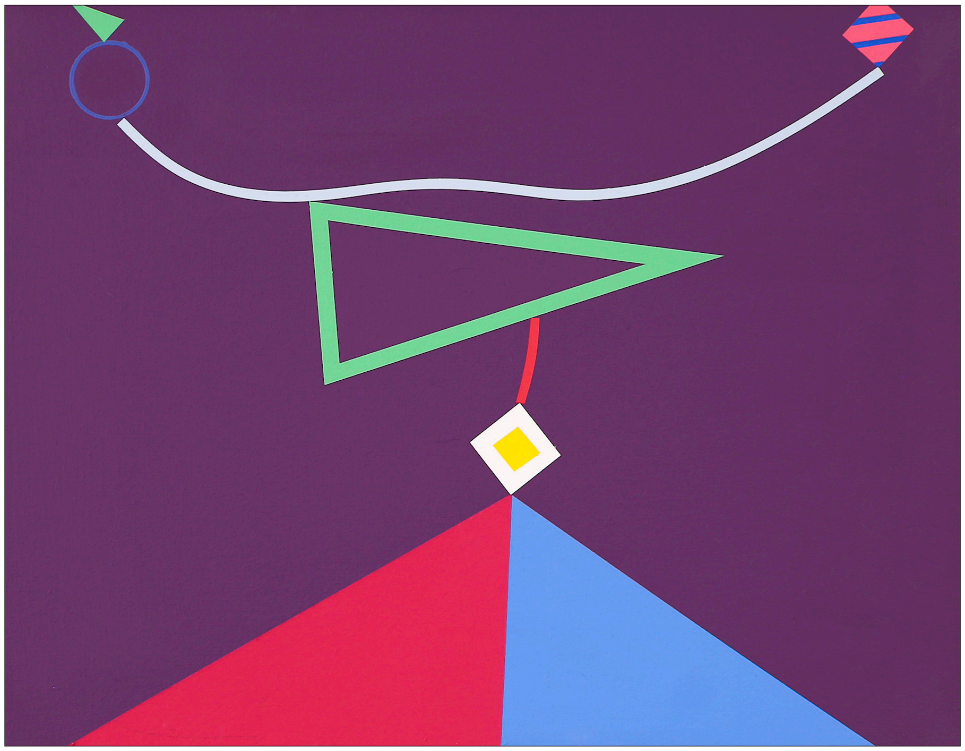


Untitled, 2005. Acrylic on canvas, 25.5 x 25 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.

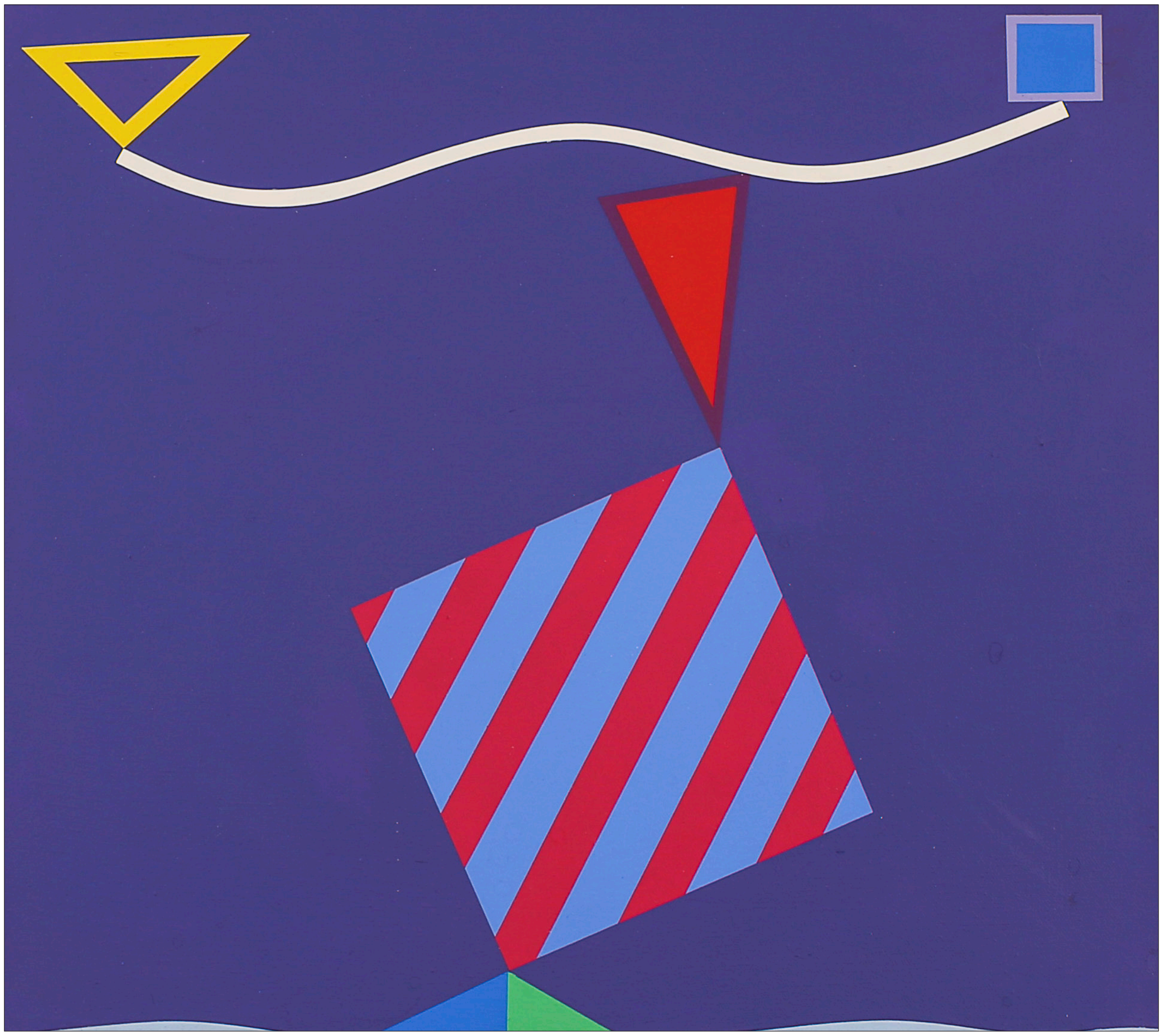


Untitled

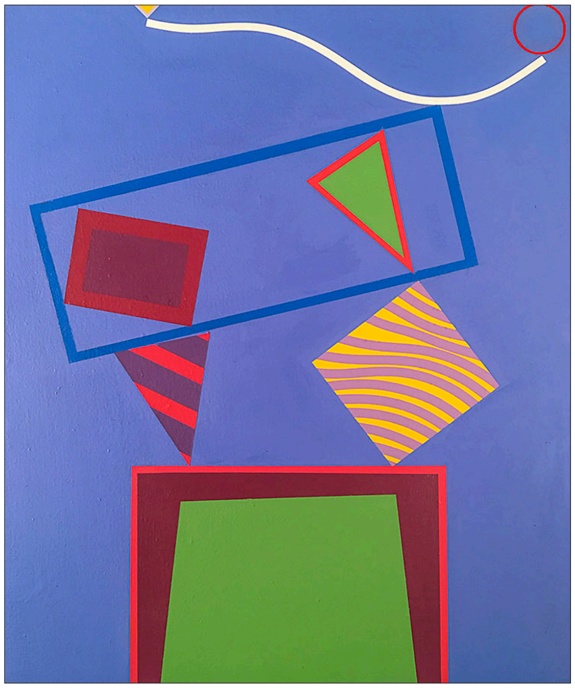
2004. Acrylic on canvas, 29.5 x 29.5 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



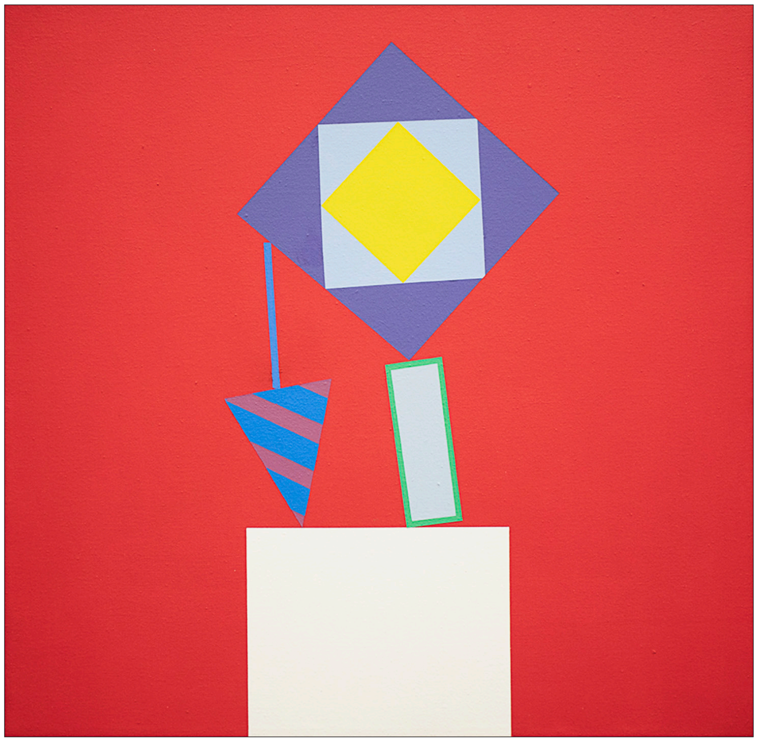
Untitled, 2005. Acrylic on canvas, 11.5 x 15 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



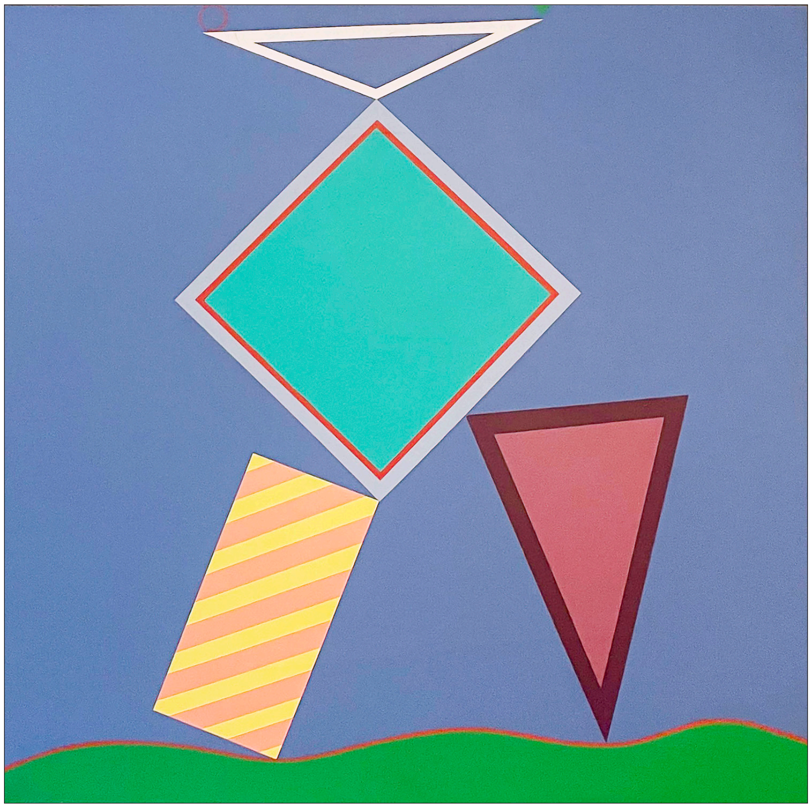
Untitled, 2006.
Acrylic on canvas, 16.5 x 18.5 in.
Collection of Meghan Freeman
and Evan Porter.



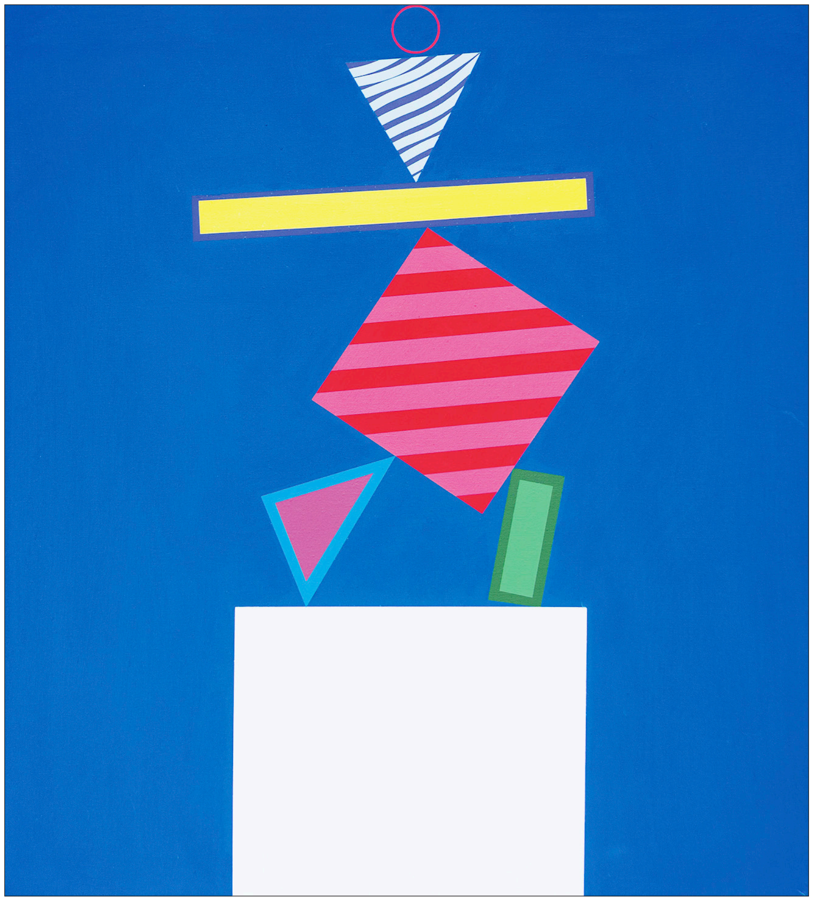
1023, 2006. Acrylic on canvas, 18.5 x 15.5 in.
Collection of MONA.



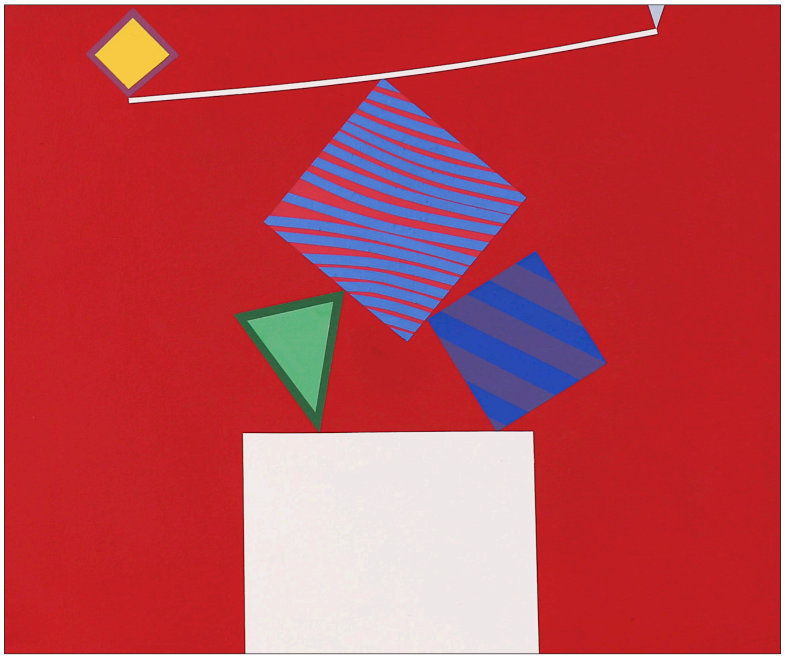
Untitled, 2007. Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 20 in.



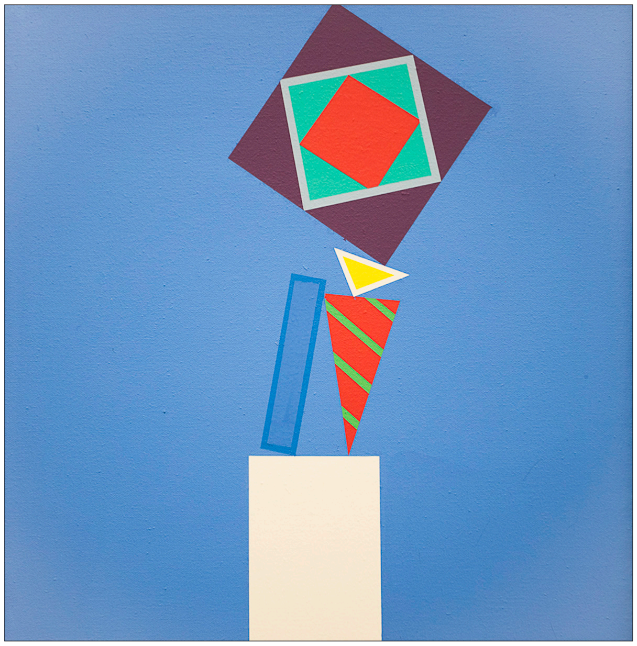
Untitled, 2006. Acrylic on canvas.
Collection of Peter and Seba Sullivan.



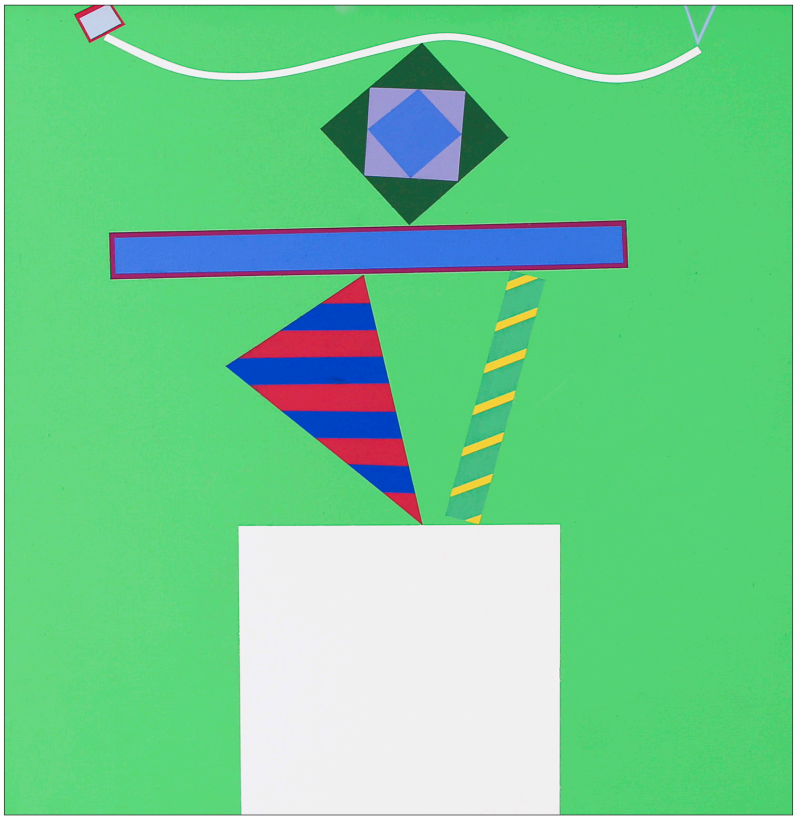
Untitled, 2007. Acrylic on canvas, 27 x 23 in.
Collection of David and Beverly Freeman.



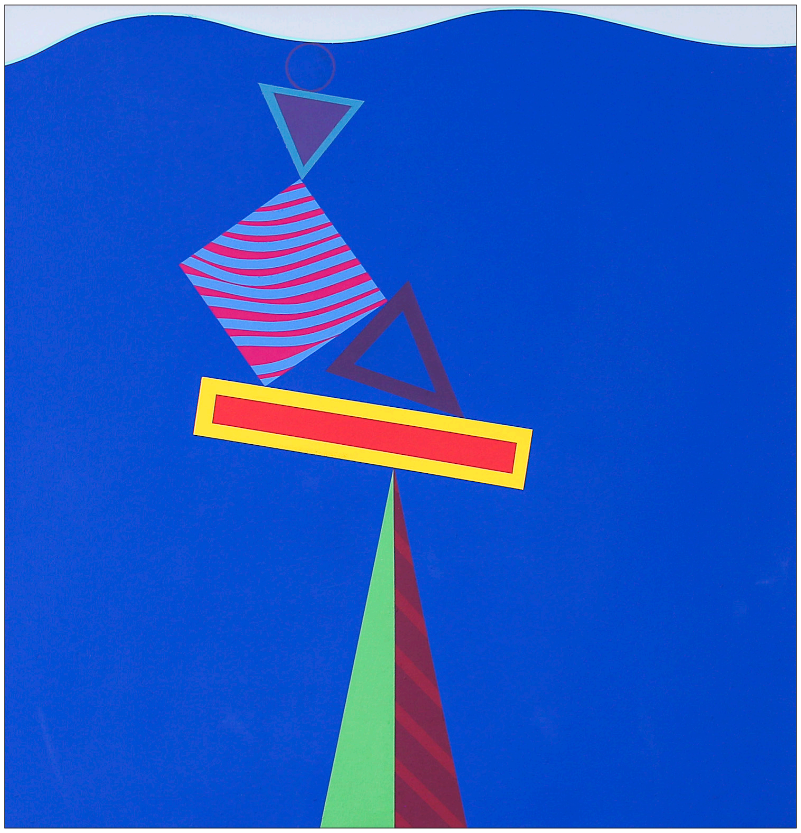
Untitled, 2007. Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 22 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



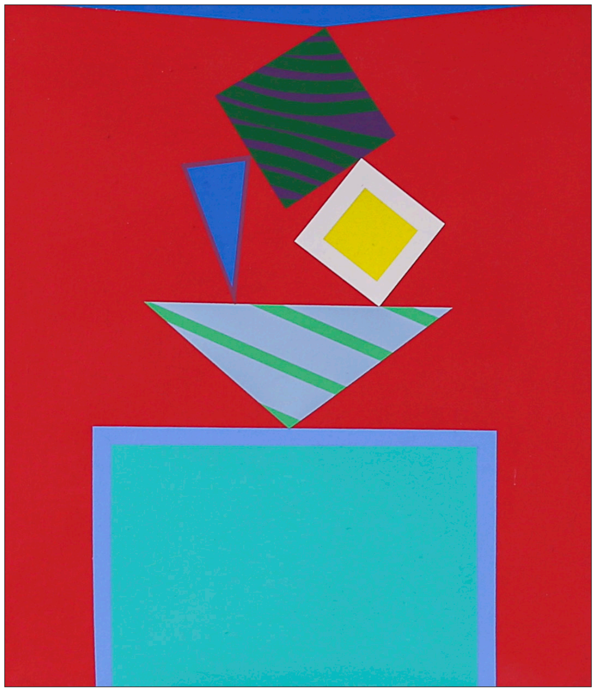
Napata, 2008. Acrylic on canvas, 17 x 17 in.



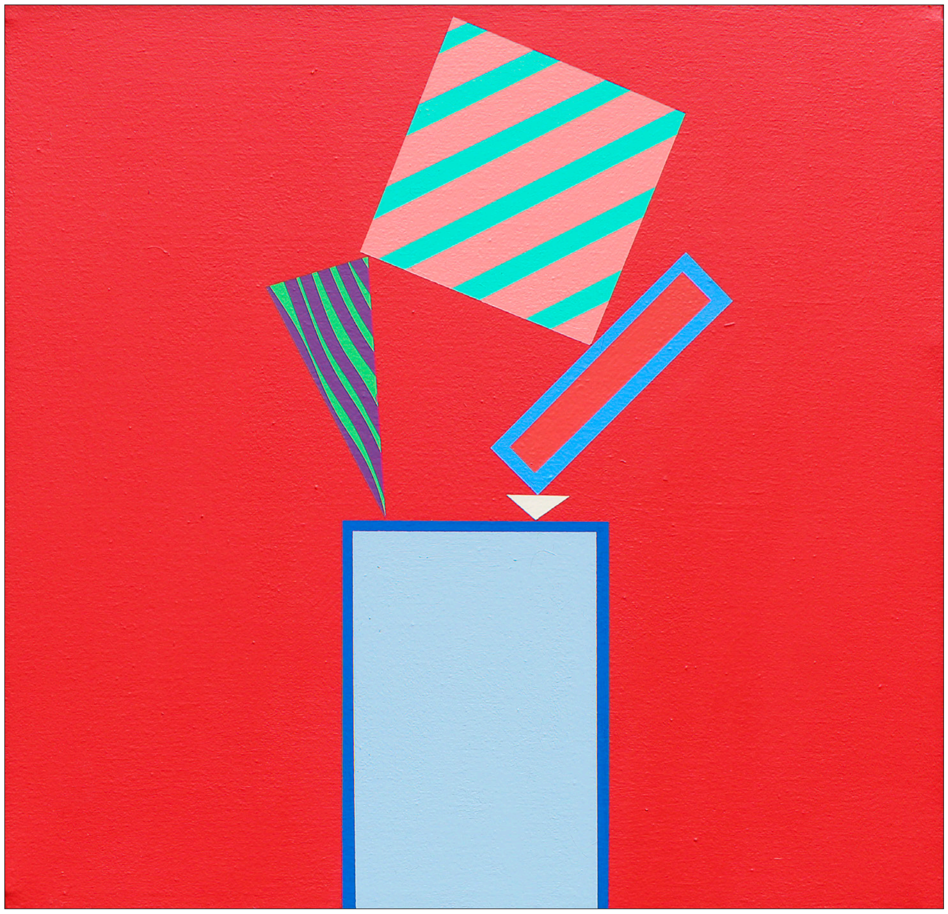
Untitled, 2007. Acrylic on canvas, 22.5 x 22.5 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



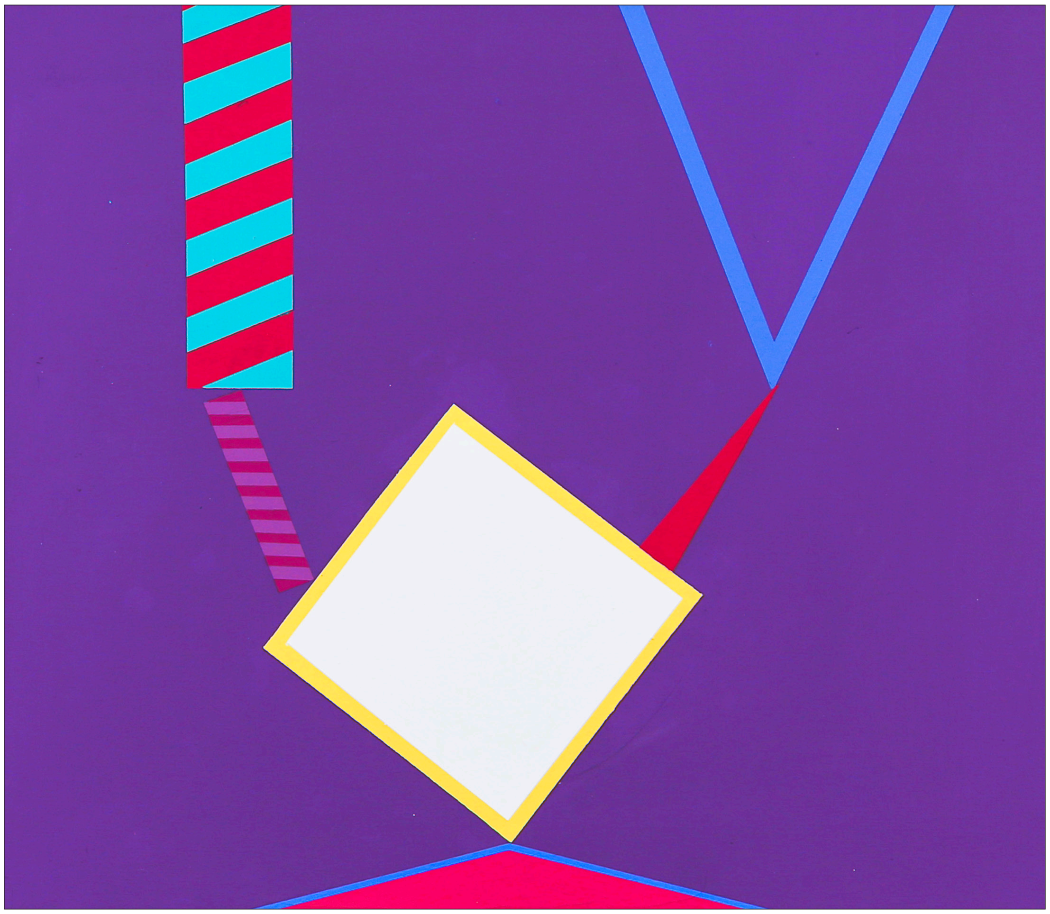
Untitled, 2007. Acrylic on canvas, 23 x 22.5 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



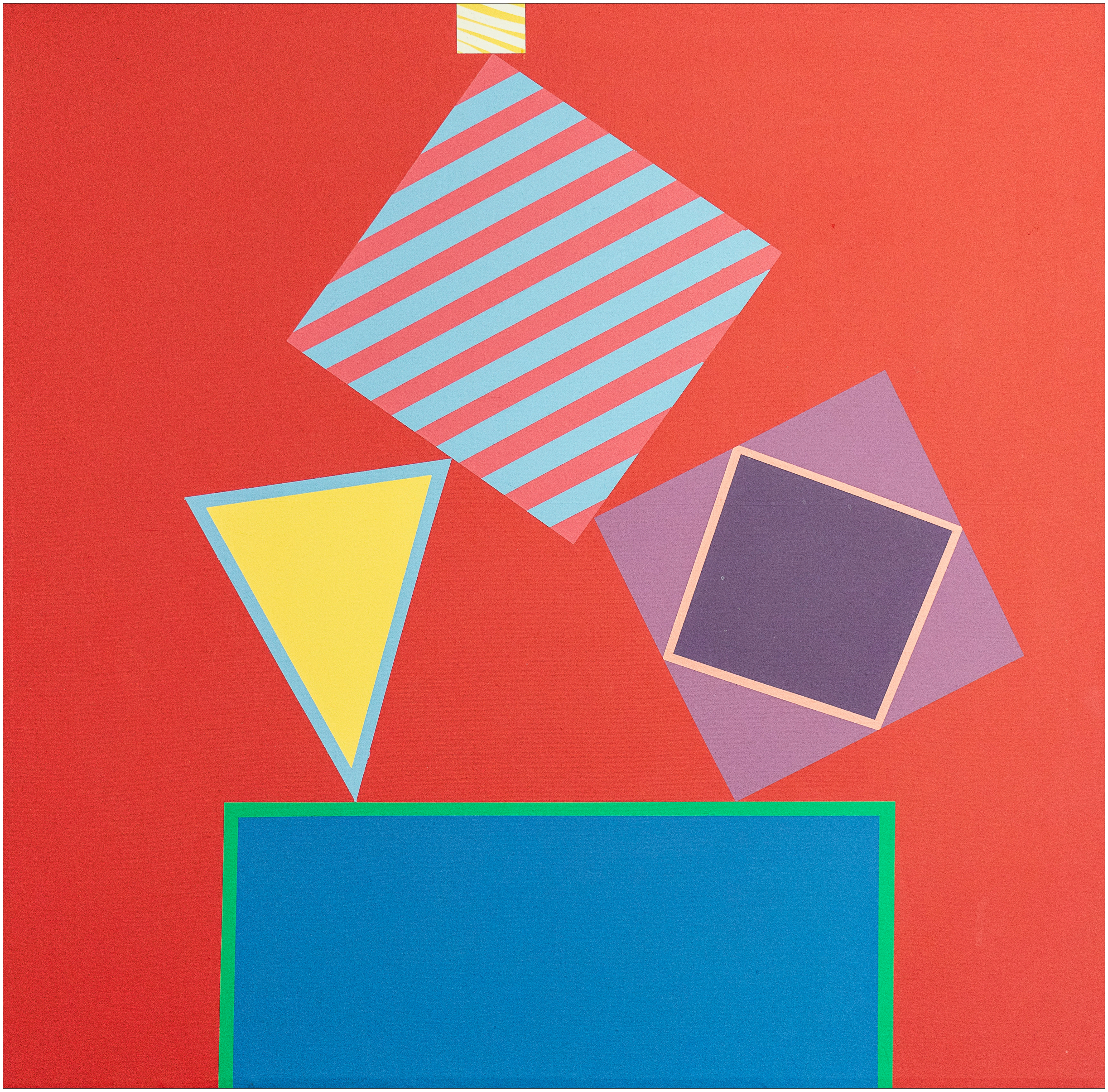
Teti-En, 2008. Acrylic on canvas, 13 x 11.5 in.
Collection of Mary and Samuel Achelpohl.



Untitled, 2009. Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 18.5 in.
Collection of Brennan M. Hill.

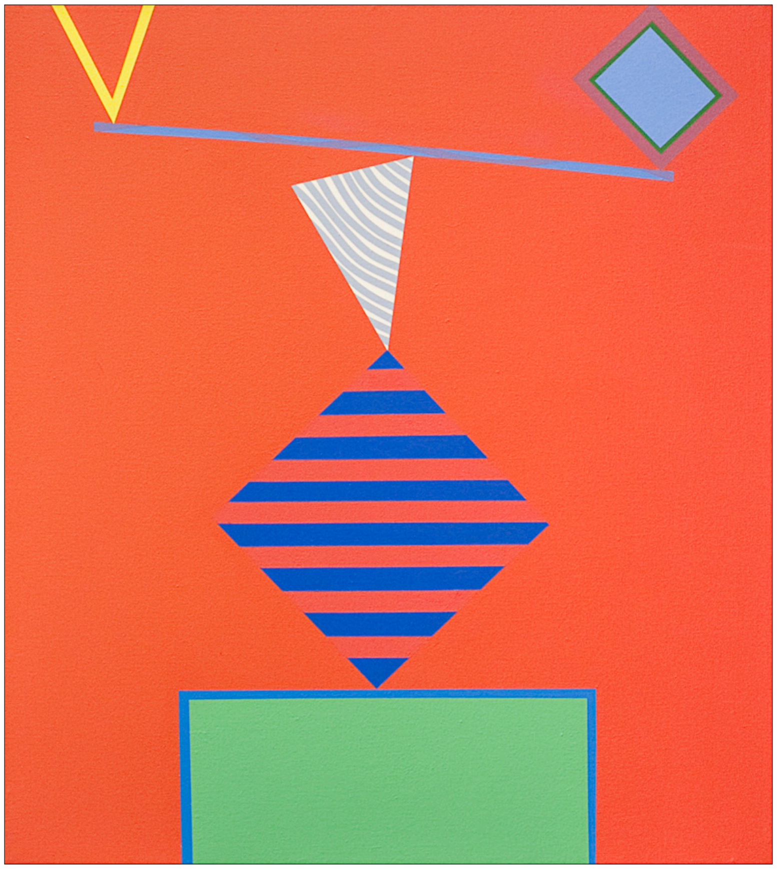


Untitled, 2012. Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 21 in.
Collection of Meghan Freeman and Evan Porter.

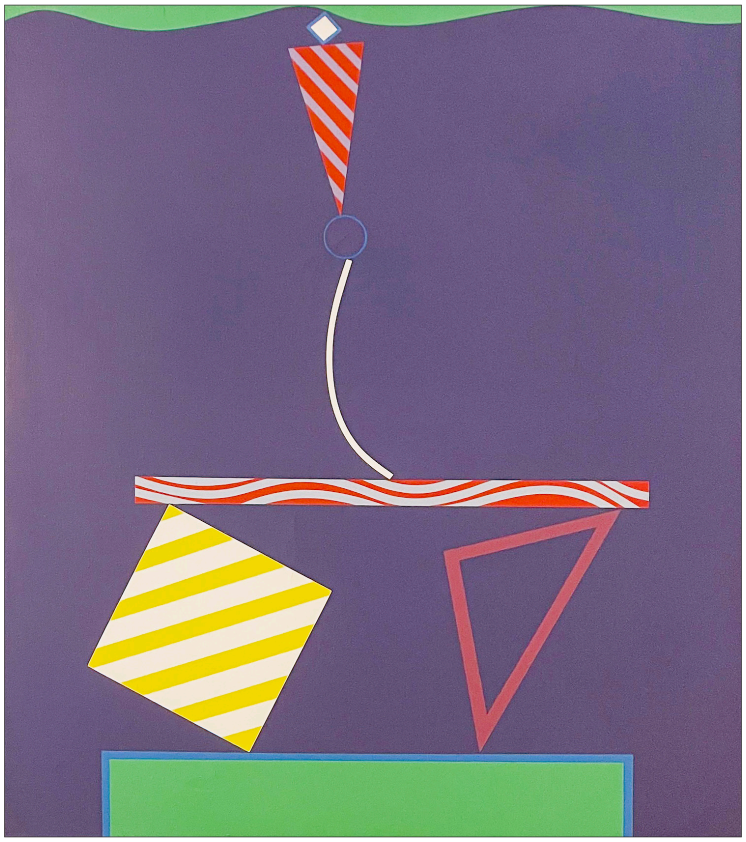


Untitled

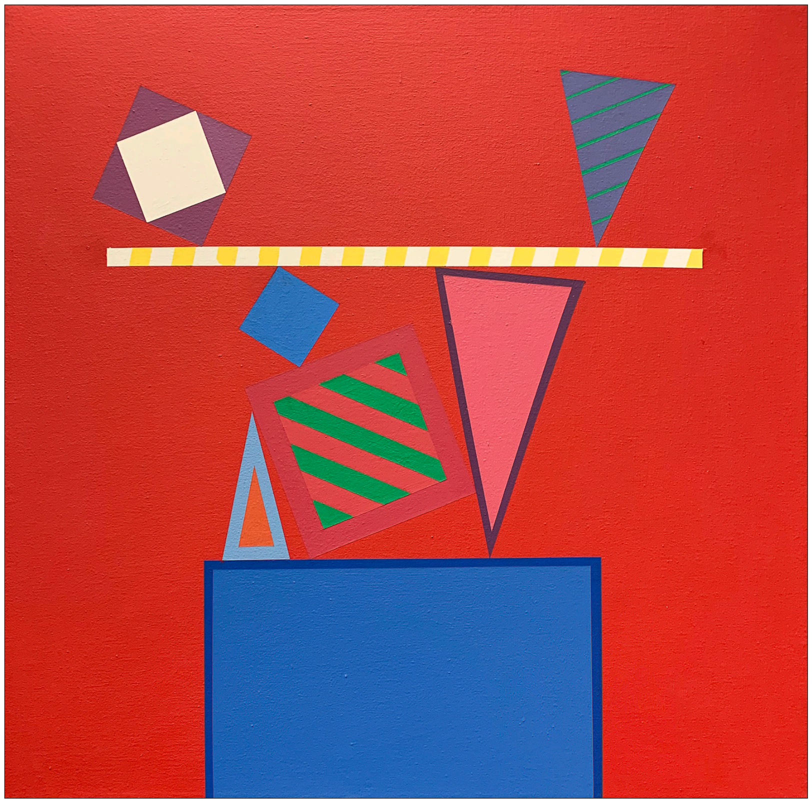
2010. Acrylic on canvas, 32 x 32 in.
Collection of Katy and Jon Welles.



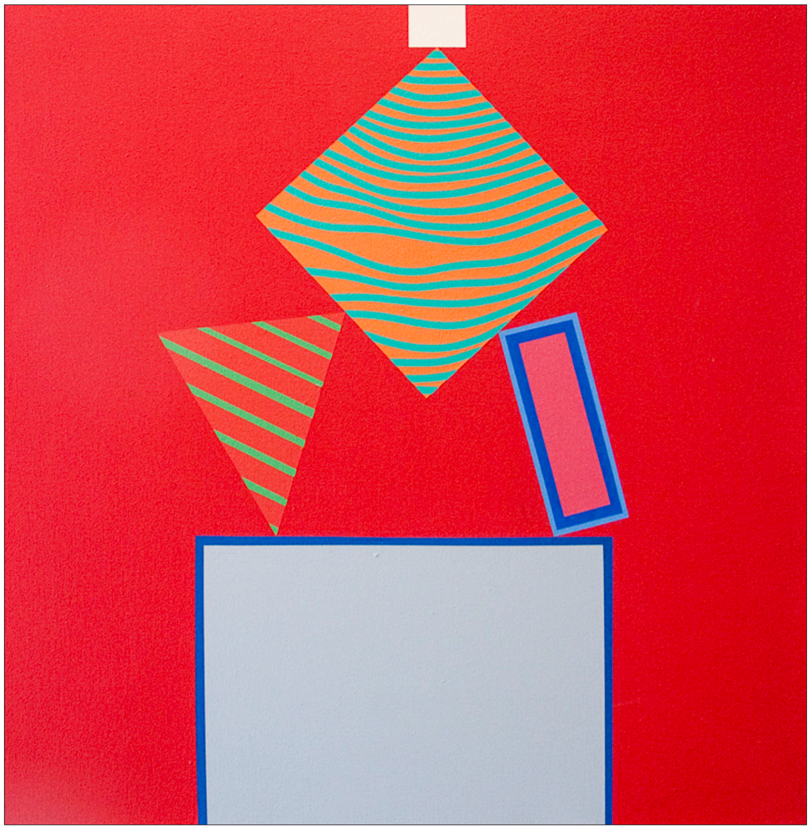
Glance, 2008. Acrylic, 29 x 26 in.



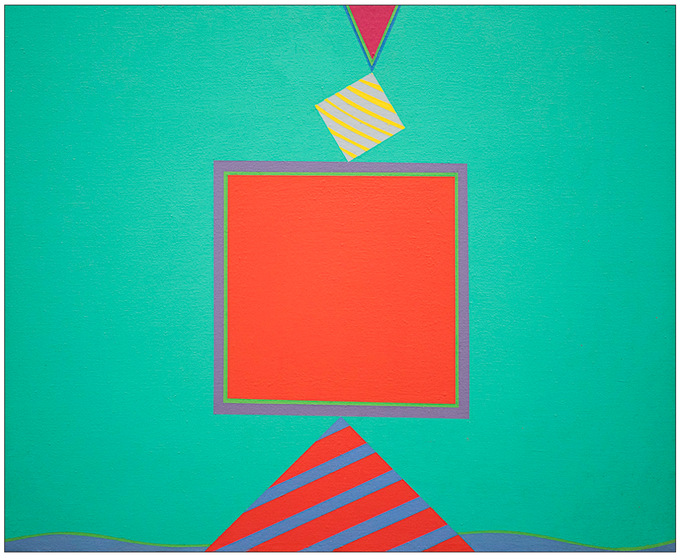
Untitled, 2011. Acrylic on canvas.
Collection of Peter and Seba Sullivan.



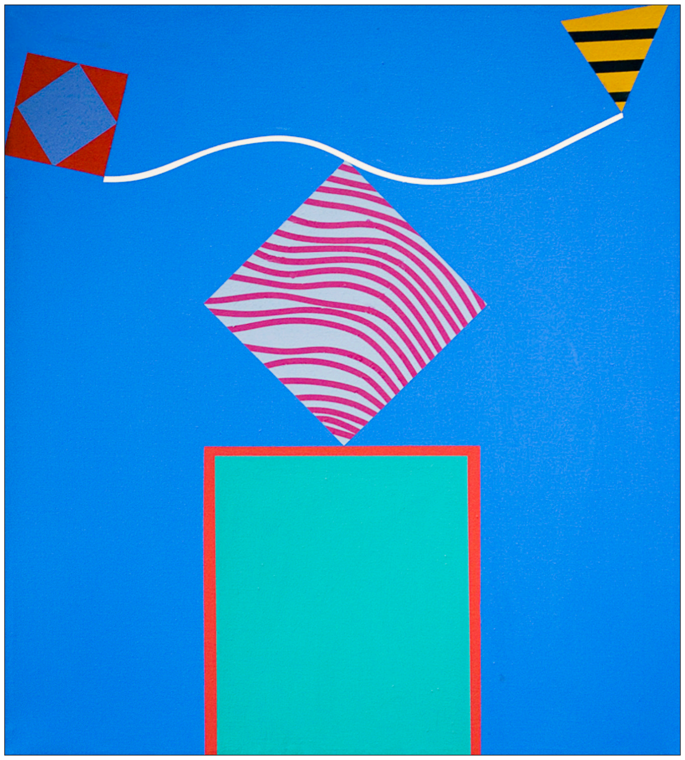
Untitled, 2009. Acrylic on canvas, 27 x 27 in.
Collection of Lindsey and Todd Freeman.



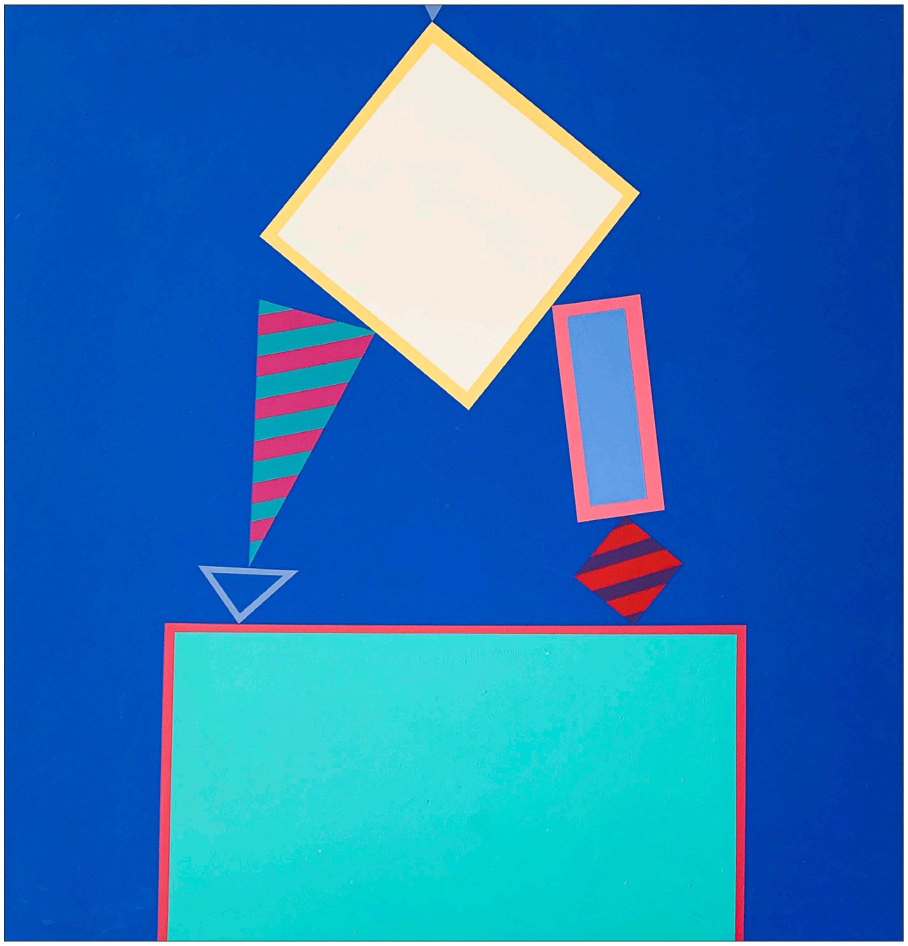
White On, 2010. Acrylic, 28 x 27 in.



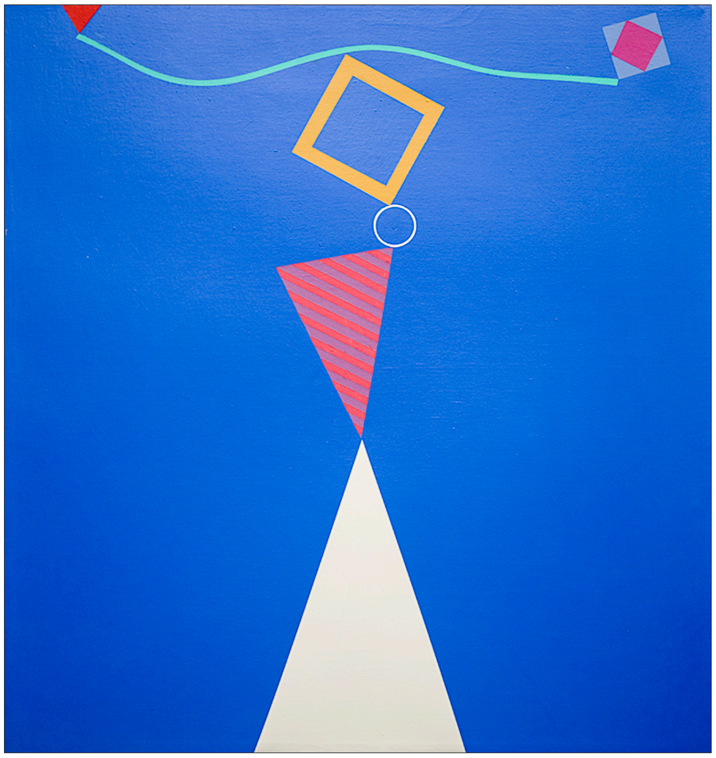
Untitled, 2009. Acrylic on canvas, 17 x 21 in.



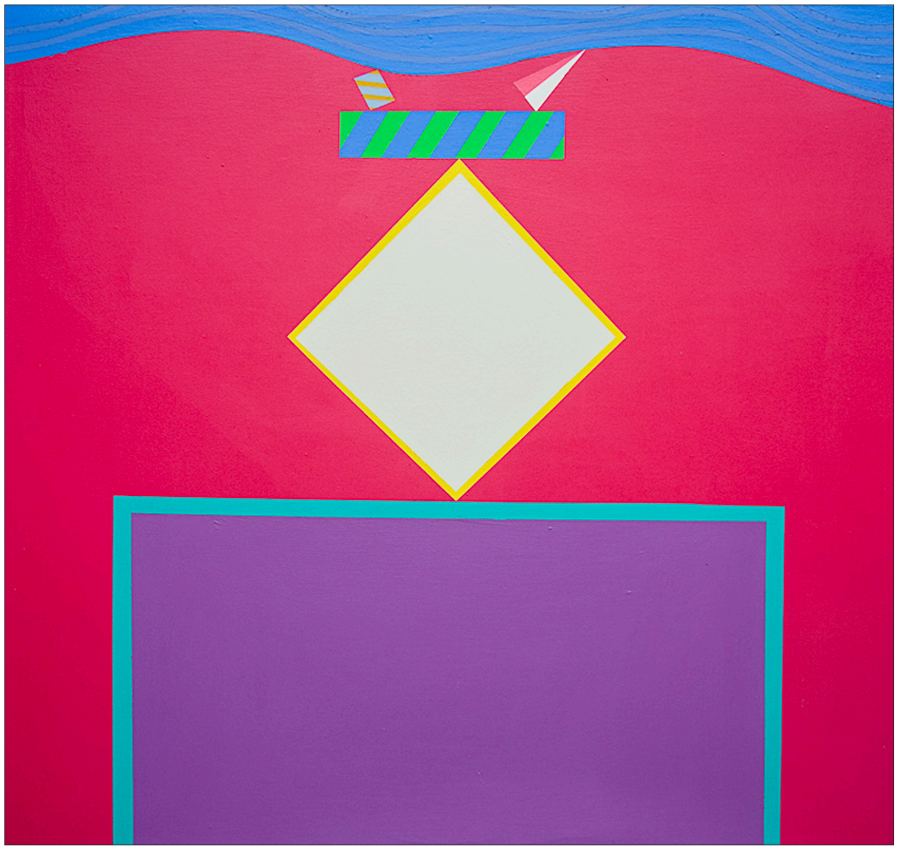
Thin White Line, 2016. Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 25 in.

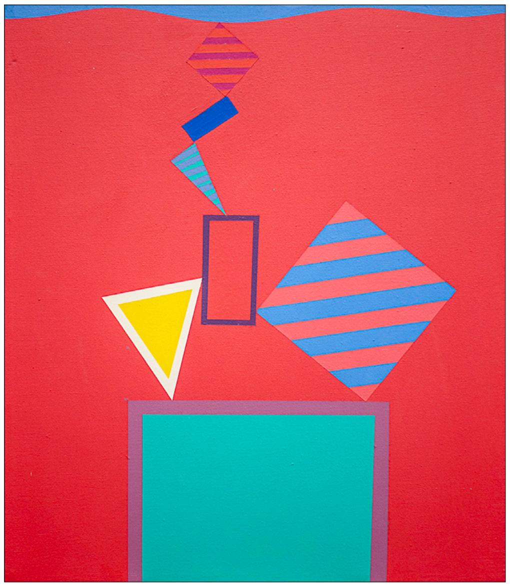


Untitled, 2013. Acrylic, 34.5 x 33.75 in.
Collection of Todd ("T. J.") and Shanna Freeman.



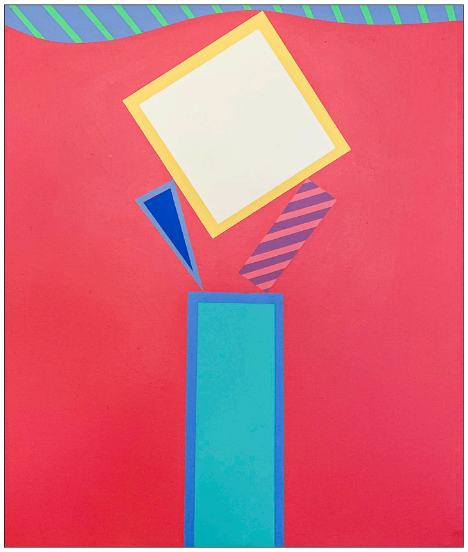
White, 2016. Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 26 in.



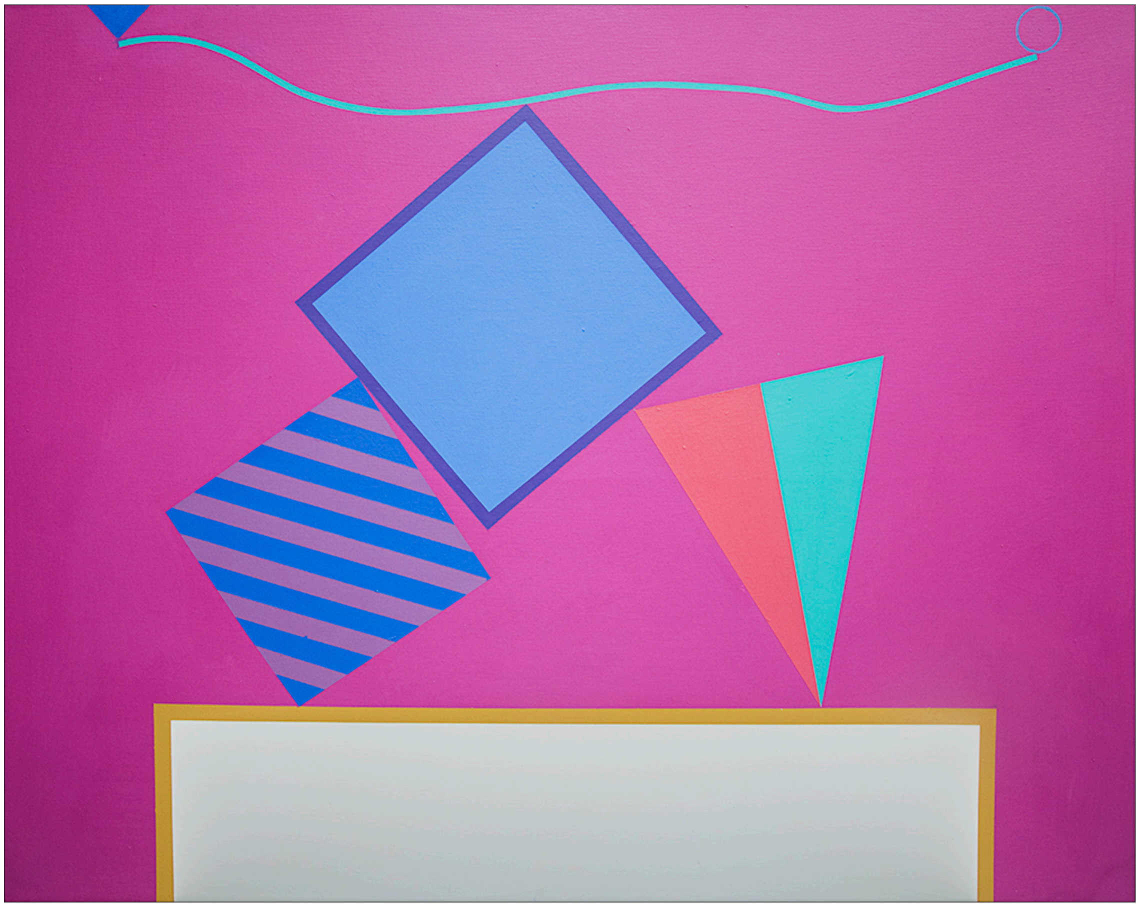


Untitled, 2017.
Acrylic on canvas, 22 x 19 in.

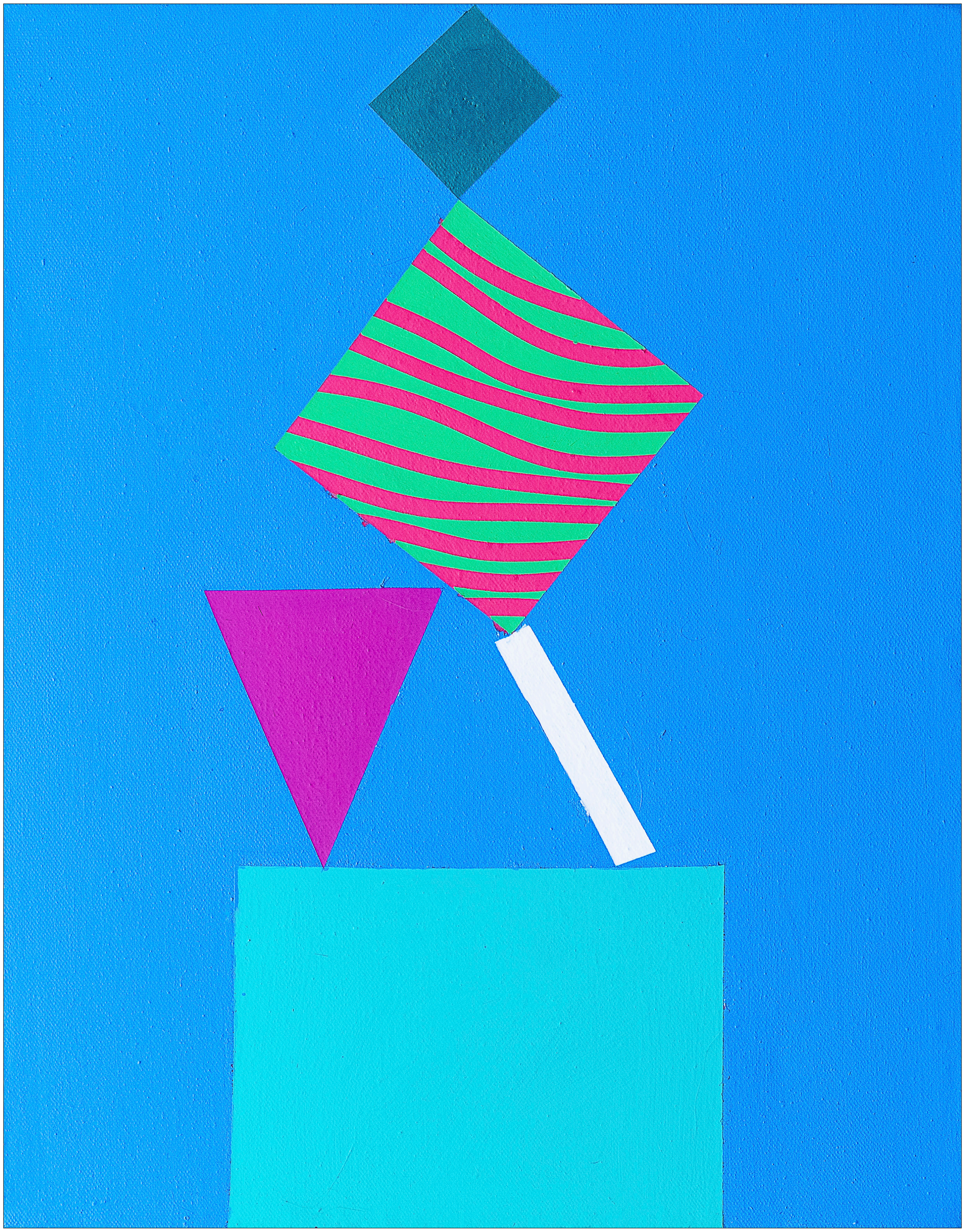
Hold Up, 2016. Acrylic on canvas, 32 x 29 in.



Alaina's Painting OOXX, 2012.
Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 17 in.
Collection T. J. & Shanna Freeman.



Balance, 2015.
Acrylic on canvas, 31 x 36 in.



Untitled (*Last Cast*)

Late 2018. Acrylic on canvas, 16.25 x 12.75 in.
Collection of Jonathan and Maureen Hill.

Modern Arts Midtown: Winter 2014

In winter 2014, the Omaha gallery Modern Arts Midtown (3615 Dodge Street) hosted an exhibition of my father's paintings. Nearly all of them dated from the 1980s to the present, but *Octagon* (1966) made a surprise appearance. The following photographs are from November 7, 2014, the show's opening date; all were taken by Sam Achelpohl.

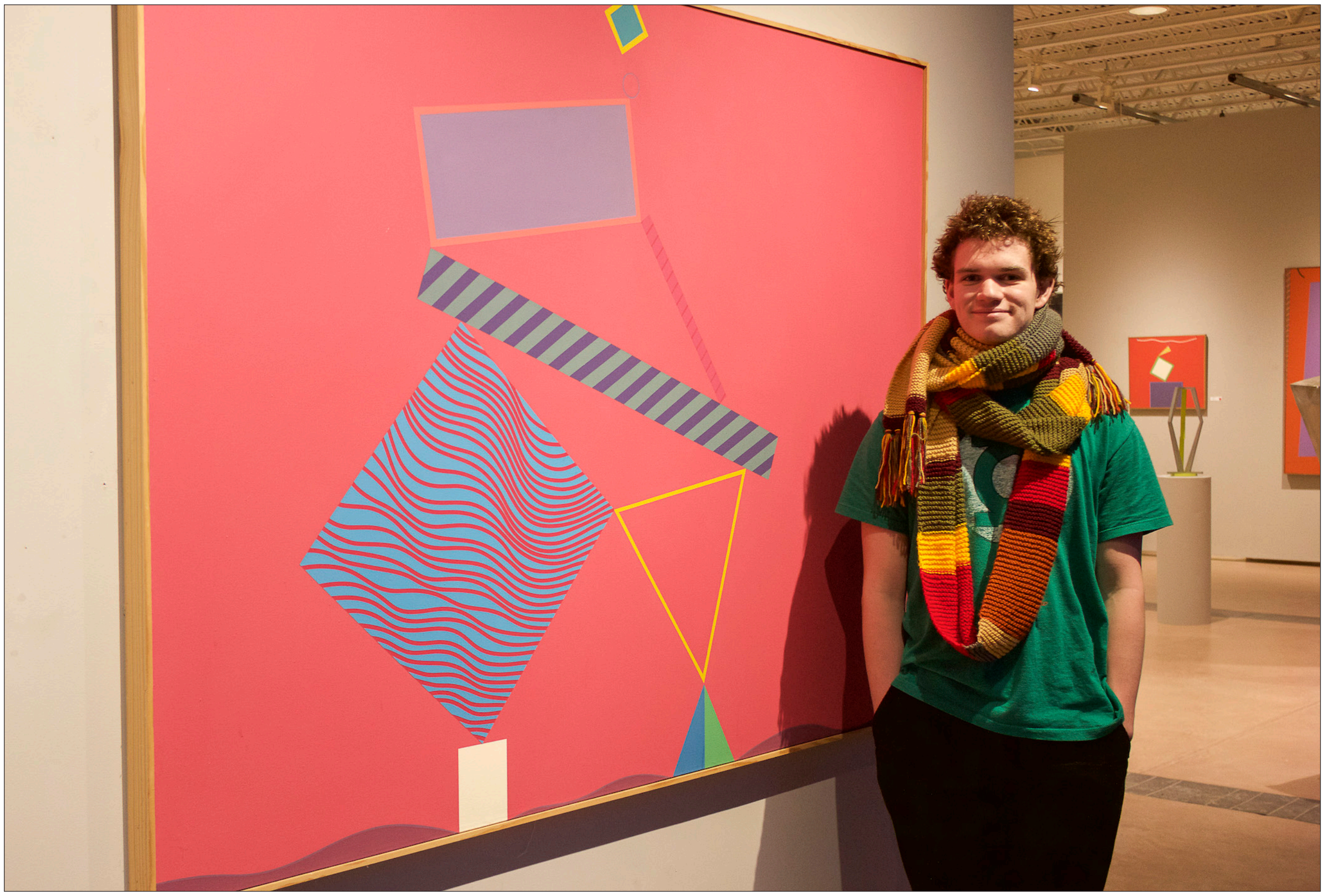
Modern Arts Midtown has represented my father for several years. As of this writing (September 2022), Larry and Judy Roots own the gallery, and their son Logan works there as well. They are still selling my father's works and giving my mother her fair share of the proceeds. My thanks to that institution and its owners for their efforts on my mother and father's behalf.

MAM
MODERN ARTS MIDTOWN
3615
EXIT

Peter and Jody Hill at the entrance to Modern Arts Midtown

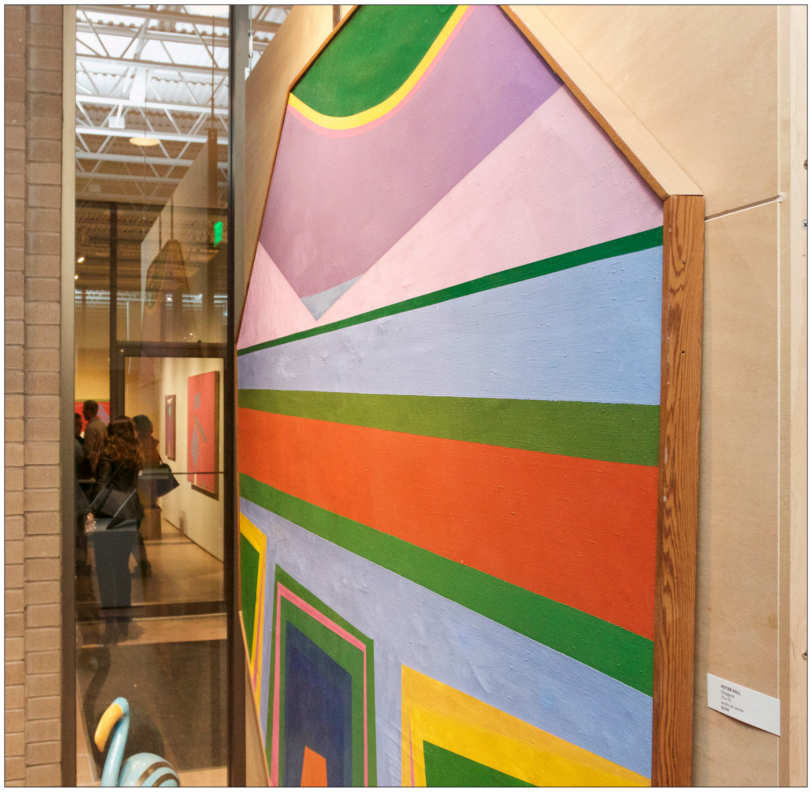
modernartsmidtown.com
M
DTOWN

Brennan Hill and Rob Hill; view is from outside the building.



Donald Hill next to *What Is Wrong with This Picture?* (2002, 52.5 x 72 in.)

Todd Freeman, Katy Welles, and Lindsey Freeman; baby is Charlotte Achelpohl.



View of *Octagon* (1966)

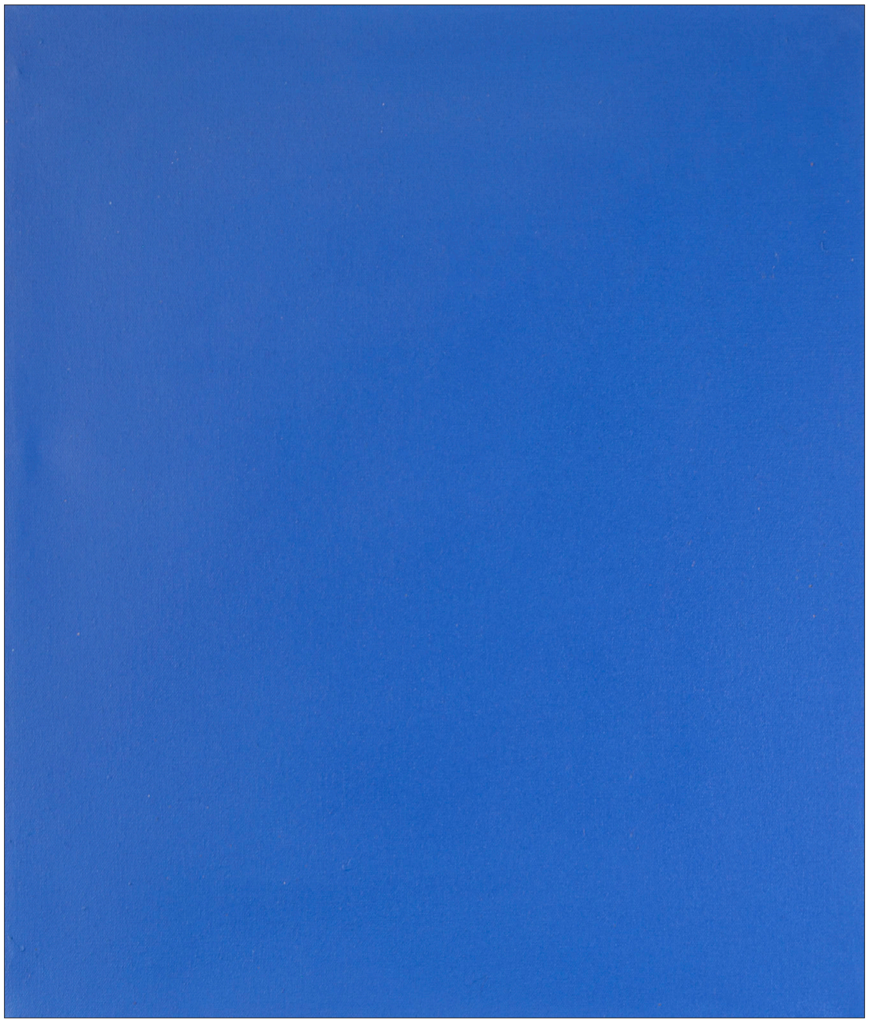
Left to right: Jon Welles, Mary Achelpohl, Charlotte Achelpohl (baby), Katy Welles, Christine Greene, Jody Hill, Stephen Hill, Robert Hill, Lindsey Freeman

Tana Siebert and Robert Hill

Christine Greene with Jon and Katy Welles

Peter Hill with Larry Roots, owner of Modern Arts Midtown

Jody Hill with grandchildren Alice and Jack



Prepared canvas, late 2018 or early 2019. Acrylic, 20.5 x 17.25 in.
Photo taken in 2022.

Afterword

At least one person said I was obsessed with making this book. That's not quite right. I wasn't obsessed. I was morally offended by the idea that my father had a sixty-year career and in two generations could be forgotten. It was an awful thought that people, including his descendants, might have his paintings and drawings on their walls and have no idea where they came from and why they have them.

I mentioned at the beginning of this book that if you own my father's art you have a job to do. Here's what it is, and why.

In December 2018 I was with my father in his hospital room. He'd just had a heart attack and was not in his right mind, which is sometimes when odd truths express themselves.

I don't recall how our conversation took this turn, but we were discussing Time and war—as if Time were the protagonist in some great struggle.

My father quizzed me: "What is Time's ambition?"

Meaning: What does Time want? What is its goal in this war? I had no idea what he was talking about.

My father answered his question firmly. "The utter destruction of the enemy. To wipe it from the Earth. That is Time's ambition."

He really said this. Student of ancient history.

My dad recovered, mostly. We never talked of Time's ambition again. I brought up the conversation once, and he didn't remember it. Not surprising: It was a deeply strange exchange, and he was not a strange man. He came home to family and friends and love and sixteen more months of a largely enjoyable life.

He died the night of April 20, 2020, after his bath, abruptly and without pain. His last sight was Jody Hill, born Joan Campbell, the woman he loved for nearly seven decades. He was turning to give her a good-night kiss.

All of this is true.

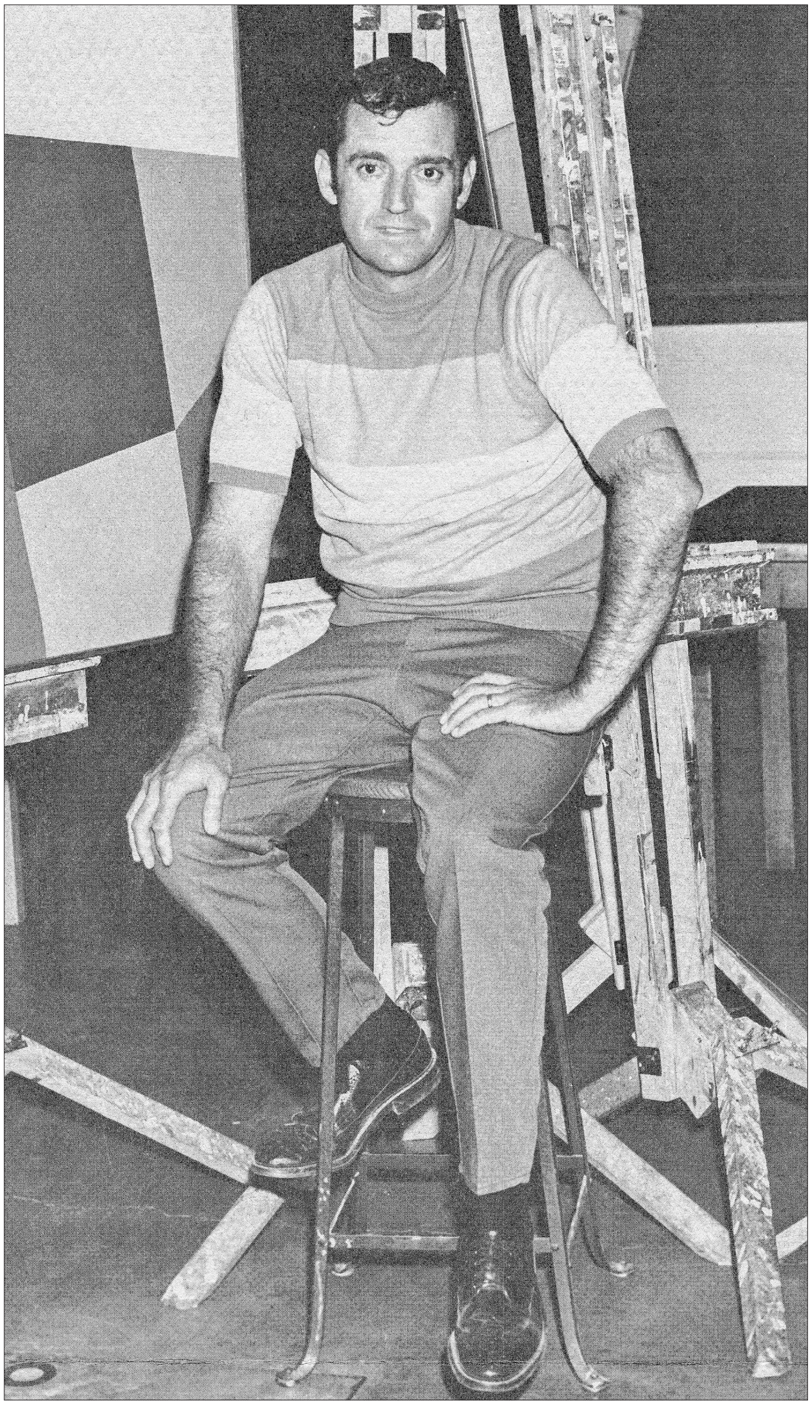
My father's paintings, drawings, and sculptures are not robust objects. Time will take them easily, with the large ones being at greater risk than the small ones. Their cords will snap and they will fall from walls where the corners of tables wait to gouge them. That's already started. There will be dents and cracks and the unfixable scrawls of innocently stupid children. Some will be discarded because they don't match someone's taste. Some might burn in fires, which is at least interesting. Others will just fall apart. In five centuries, we'll be lucky if a couple are left. Probably none will be.

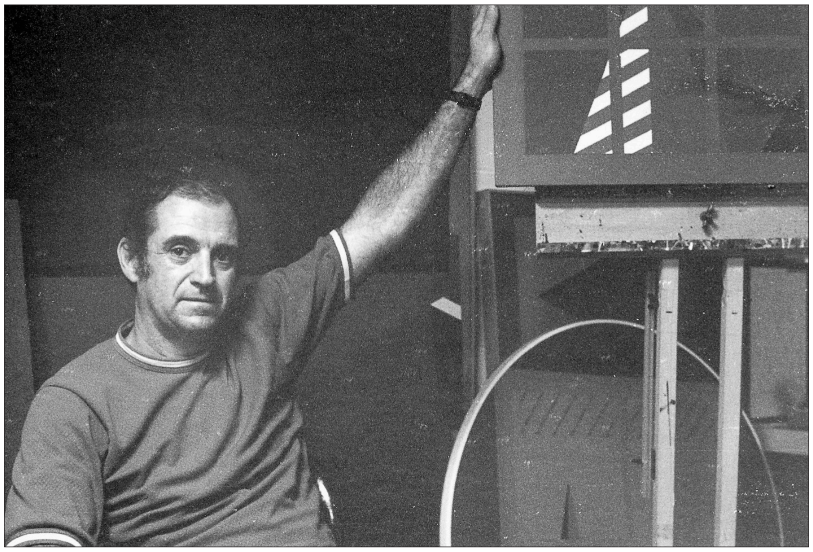
My father was not a famous artist. Most of his art is with family and friends. Keeping it safe to pass it on—to help it outlive you—is your job.

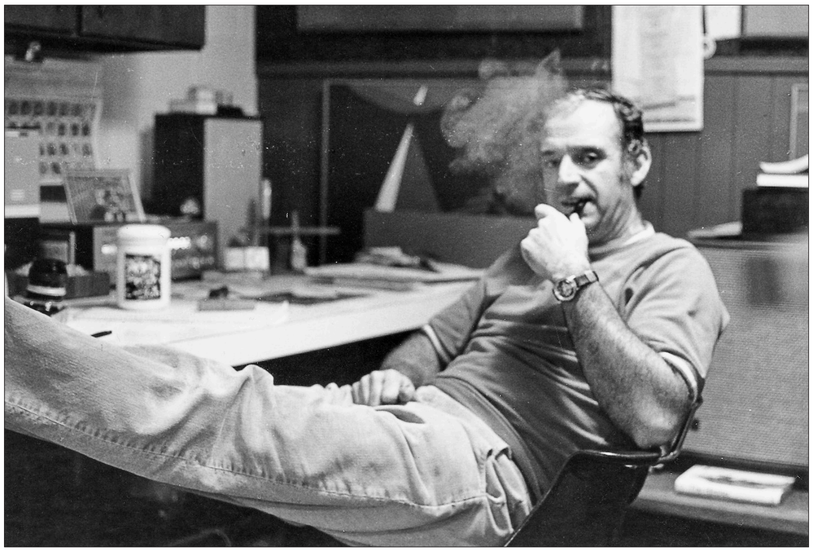
Time has one ambition. This book has another: to help my father's art and memory last longer than it might otherwise. This book's goal is to help you understand where that odd picture on your wall came from and why you should care for it. You'll know something of who Peter Hill was and what he made despite having never seen him alive or heard his voice or gone fishing with him, even once.

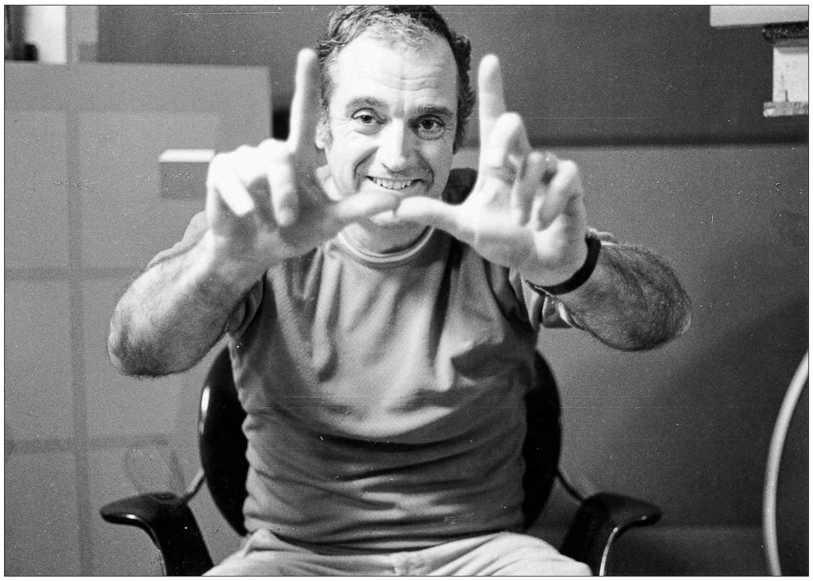
Right column: Photographs in the artist's studio at 11734 Shirley Street in Omaha, Nebraska; 1979 or 1980

Below: Photograph on the pamphlet for the 1972 show at South Dakota State University









A Grandchild's Biography of Peter Hill

In spring 2012, one of Peter's grandchildren, Donald Hill, was assigned to write a biography of a family member for an eighth-grade writing class. Donald chose his 79-year-old grandfather and interviewed both him and his daughter Lindsey. Jody Hill looks fondly on this essay, so it is included here.

My grandfather couldn't sit still in church. He was always moving about, and acted like a little kid. He would wriggle, giggle, and blow his nose. From this point of view, you may say he was not a very religious man. Now hear the other side. At home, he'd read the Bible to my Aunt Lindsey, especially the Old Testament. He even went as far as having her dress up as Bathsheba for a church Halloween party. Now, this may seem unrelated to anything of importance. "Who cares about this little story?" you may say. To which I say, "Stop asking questions. You've said too much as it is. I'm the one talking." It's important because it shows exactly what kind of man my grandfather is. A very kind, clever man who cares for his family. One could not ask for a better man. Yet you may ask, despite my firmest wishes that you stop interrupting me, how did he become this man? If you aren't, fine. I've just lost my segue into the next paragraph. If you did ask, though, you've just made my job easier. I think I'll start with the beginning. You know, that funny thing called . . .

CHILDHOOD. As far as childhoods go, I could say he had a fairly normal one. He had an older brother, a (very tall) dad, and a (very short) mom. His dad, it should bear noting, was ten years older than his mother. As for his brother, their relationship was not very good. The brother, Lyman Jr., bullied Grandpa. But instead of focusing on bad things, how about we focus on the positives. My grandfather's favorite memories, for instance. One that really stuck out in his mind is when he was going to Massachusetts. This was before World War Two. His grandfather worked in a jail near the pond, which is why my grandfather was there at all. The other guards would keep an eye on my grandpa so he wouldn't get into trouble. My grandfather managed, by some miracle, to stay out of trouble and instead fished in the pond. He never actually caught that many fish, but he did manage to catch turtles and frogs instead. Frogs were especially easy. He just had to hook something red up to his fishing pole and start fishing. The frogs would immediately attempt to eat it.

While he may have been able to stay out of trouble there, he did a few bad things. My personal favorite, and one that proves I am his grandchild, is when he stole a dollar from his mom and bought ten comic books. To put that in perspective, that many comic books today would cost forty or so dollars. He had basically stolen forty dollars from his mom, and he would have gotten away with it if she hadn't found the evidence. The evidence being the comics.

Needless to say, he didn't only fish and get into trouble. He also helped with the war effort. He was a paper trooper. He would go out and collect paper to donate. When he did, he got a cloth strip. To this day, he doesn't know what the purpose of it was. And to address all you animal lovers out there, my grandfather kept two pets as a child. One was a cat that he loved. It was just a kitten when it died, though. It ate some rat poison. The other pet, a dog, reinforces the idea that dogs are worse than cats. This was a miserable little dog. He was mean, which my grandfather says was because of its diminutive size. It was trying to compensate. They eventually had to return the dog to the pound. And finally, he did a few of the fine arts. He played piano, trombone, and the bass drum. He said that he didn't really take to any of them. No, the art form he took to was . . .

PAINTING. Specifically, modern art. He decided that he wanted to be an artist when he met a guy [Richard Leach at Albion College] who worked with ceramics. He thought to himself, "This guy is paid for playing with mud." That inspired him to go to Cranbrook, where he felt dumb. He then got a college job in Omaha teaching art history and painting classes. He liked what he was doing there, even though when he was promoted to department head he was slightly grumpy. In fact, his favorite part was teaching art history, which he had to teach. It was forced upon him, but he still loved it more than the other classes. Modern Art gave it a run for its money, though. Grandpa loved the variety and difference of modern art. He thought of it like a contest between the artists, which he liked. He personally thought Botticelli was brilliant. Grandpa liked him when he was a little kid because his paintings were cool, especially *Primavera*. He can't decide on his own best piece of art, so he says whatever he's working on at the moment is his best piece. All of this caused him little stress, except for when he was department head, as noted before. He dealt with the stress by looking forward to Canada, which will be discussed in the next category . . .

MARRIAGE. As we all know, to marry someone you must meet someone. My grandpa met my grandmother in college. He saw her and asked her out. He offended her on the first date, but it eventually worked out. The story is quite entertaining, but I don't think my grandparents want you lot reading it. You lot, of course, being my classmates. After they were married, they had to figure out where they wanted to live. Or maybe that comes first, I'm not sure. Whatever the case, my grandparents settled in Omaha. This was because Grandpa had gotten a job there, and it was a good town to live in, though my dad might disagree. They also bought a cabin in Canada. This was influenced by his favorite childhood memory. Remember that pond in Massachusetts? My grandfather loved the water ever afterwards, so he wanted to get a cabin by a lake. They first started searching for a cabin in Missouri, but when they couldn't get one they moved north until they arrived at their current cabin. They bought it, and it has brought many good experiences to them in return.

Grandpa and Grandma had six children, who they were great examples for. They acted very "lovey" in my Aunt Lindsey's words. A little before dinner, the older kids would leave them alone so they could just have couple time. No, not like that. Really. Get your mind out of the gutter, people. Finally, the cycle of marriage went full circle when my Aunt Lindsey married her husband, Todd. Of course, it has since lapped itself five times over as the rest of his children have gotten married. At Lindsey's wedding, Grandpa didn't give a toast. He did, however, invite all of his friends and family to the wedding. It was great.

Now, you may have been wondering how come I've brought Lindsey up so much. Two reasons. One, she is the second source I interviewed. Two, she is my segue into my final body paragraph . . .

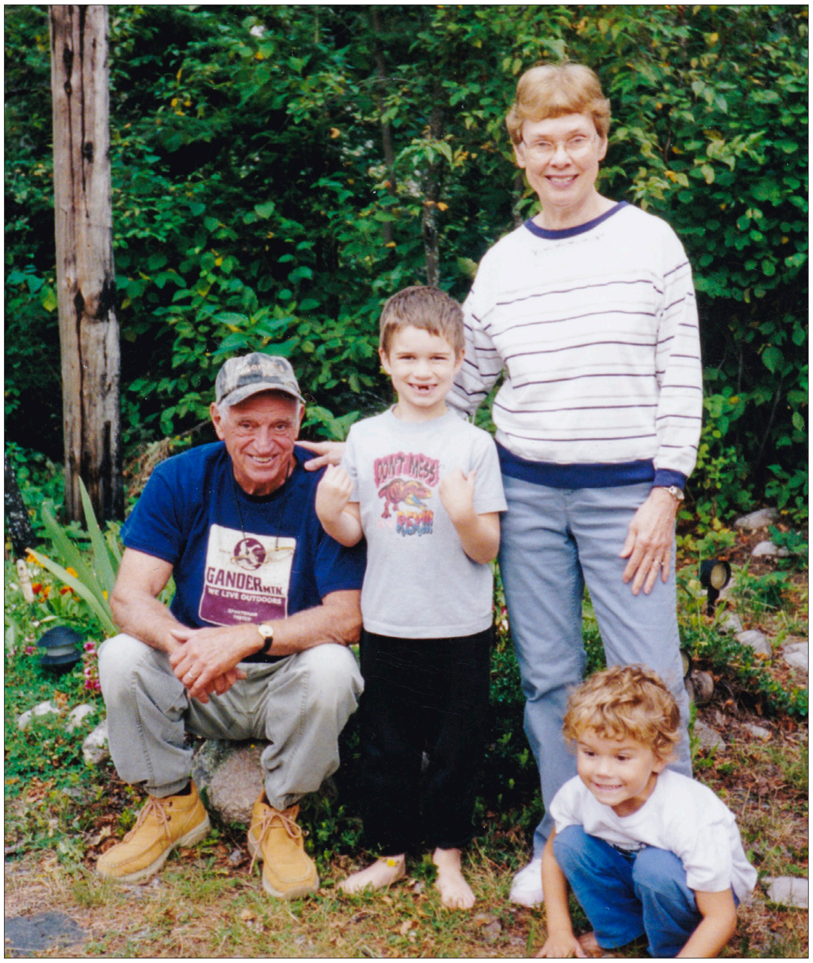
CHILDREN! Grandpa loved his children, needless to say. He didn't have any choice in their names, though. That was Grandma's job.

His first child, Lindsey's (See? I told you she'd come up) first memory of him was going to a poetry reading with him. She tried to be a good little girl and sit very still. She remembered that she liked meeting new people and eating the cookies at the end. They got along very well. She always felt protected and loved by him. He always took time to talk with her and teach her. He also drove her everywhere. While he was driving, he'd whistle to classical music. This embarrassed her greatly, so one day she told him to stop. He said, "Okay, Nonny." What Nonny means, I will never know. Afterwards, she felt like a brat. He didn't limit his kindness to his family, either. One time, when one of Lindsey's friends was stuck without a ride, Grandpa drove the kid home.

Speaking of memories, Lindsey remembered her Canada trips with him. They'd build forts together, fish, and hike. They used tools like hammers and nails to build the forts. As for the fishing, all six of the current family members (Grandpa, Grandma, Lindsey, Peter Jr., Jim, and Steve) would pile into the boat and fish. They didn't catch much, and Lindsey was impatient. She especially enjoyed it when she went on fishing trips with just her and Grandpa. He'd tell her stories about Vikings and Pirates on the lake to keep her entertained. They also did bonding activities in Omaha. They mainly went to museums and concerts. When they didn't want to leave the house, they watched old movies and *Star Trek*. They spent a lot of time together. His behavior was a bit different with his other kids, though. For instance, when my dad was born, Lindsey and Grandma monopolized him. He just stayed back and cared for his father. Grandpa loved to watch his dad play with mine, though. They'd sit in the living room and talk about how wonderful my dad was. Liars.

It's been a blast and all, but I have to go now. I'll leave you with my personal feelings on my grandfather. He is, in one word: awesome. He's funny, clever, and kind. He has his purpose in life and has quite a bit of fun living in it. If this paper didn't convince you of this, then you didn't quite take it all in. If I ever meet a man as enjoyable to be around as him, I will be astonished. And here's the thing: it could have gone entirely differently. He was a modern artist. If he so chose, he could have lived in New York and had a small family. He would have been rich, but I wouldn't exist. But he chose family over money, and to that, I am entirely in his debt. There are also all those other factors, but I think this one's more astonishing.

Oh, and before I forget. His name is Peter.



Peter, Donald, Jody, and Brennan Hill. Canada, 2005.

Peter Hill's Memoirs

In the mid-2010s, my mother persuaded my father to write his memoirs. The following pages are his writings; the various photos and illustrations stem from family albums and research.

I was born in 1933. At that time the Depression was at its height. In 1939 I was six years old and the United States was just coming out of the Depression. It was a time with World War II going on over seas, but we were not yet in it. FDR was in his second term and the economy was getting back on track. During the Depression my dad always had a job. Not much pay, but it was enough for us to get by pretty well.

After graduating from Harvard in 1923 my father decided to go west. Before World War I he went to Brown University. He could take the train from Franklin, Massachusetts, for classes and be back home in pretty good time. When we got into the war he joined up. He didn't see much action. He got sick. Thank God it wasn't the Spanish Flu. He spent most of the war in the north of France. He was on the big guns and I don't think he got a shot off. When he got back home he felt it was better to go to Harvard and be a little closer to home. Out west he did go.

Lyman Gilman Hill, Sr., the artist's father

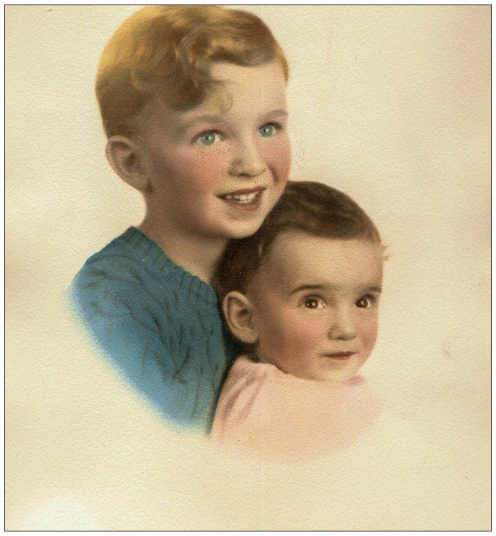
DETROIT COPPER & BRASS ROLLING MILLS
Detroit Copper and Brass Factory ca. 1925

He got as far as Detroit where I was born. Because of his major in chemistry he was perfect for what was going on in Detroit at the time. His first job was at Detroit Copper and Brass. He left that job because it was dangerous work. He thought it was poisoning him. He was an environmentalist even back then. Then he went to work for General Motors where he stayed until he retired. Even during hard times he seemed to do OK.

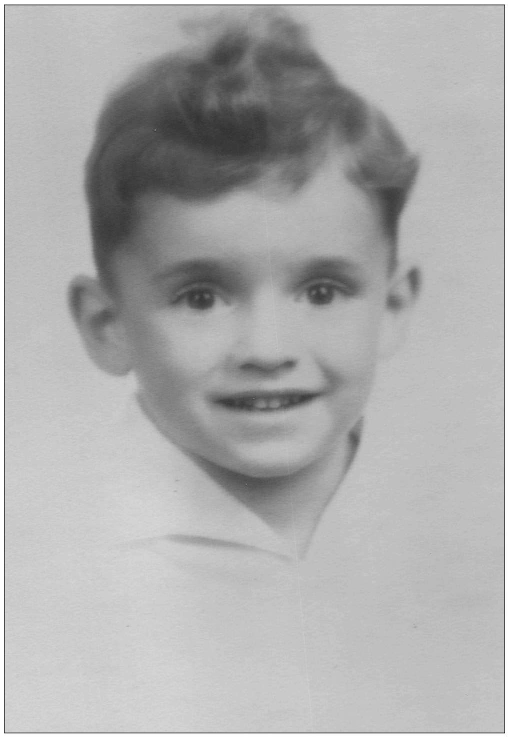
GENERAL MOTORS
General Motors Headquarters, Detroit, MI, 1921

Helen Johnson and Lyman Hill, 9-19-1929

Just after 1927 my father went back to New England to get married. Her name was Helen Louise Johnson and she had grown up in Franklin, Massachusetts, where my father was raised. They came back to Detroit and after several years my brother, Lyman Jr., was born. My dad called my brother Cadet. When I came along three-and-a-half years later, I had no such nickname. My brother was very blonde and people said he looked like an angel. When I was born a month early, I had lots of dark hair and my toes were crossed. My mother thought that I looked like a monkey when first saw me. She liked me anyway.

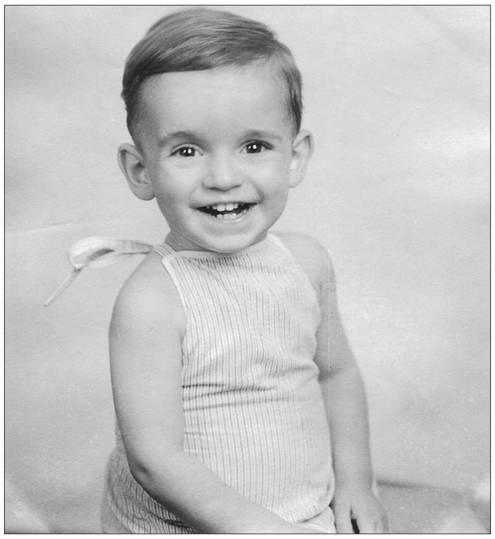


Lyman Hill, Jr., and Peter in 1934



Peter at age 2

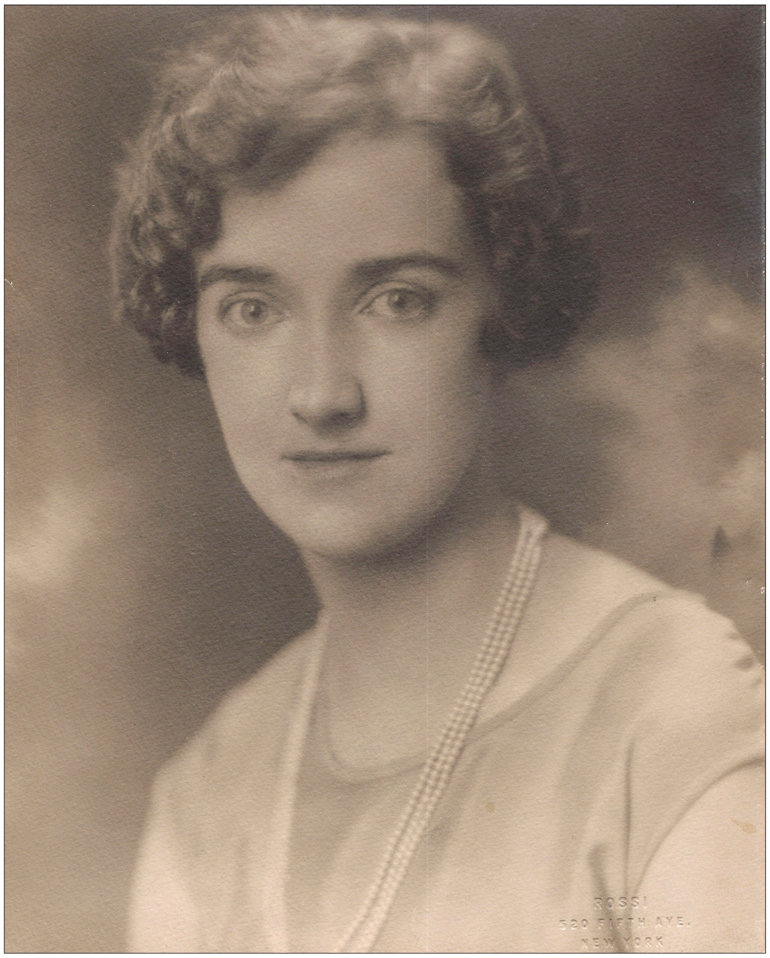
Lyman Hill, Sr., Peter Hill, and Lyman Hill, Jr., 1934



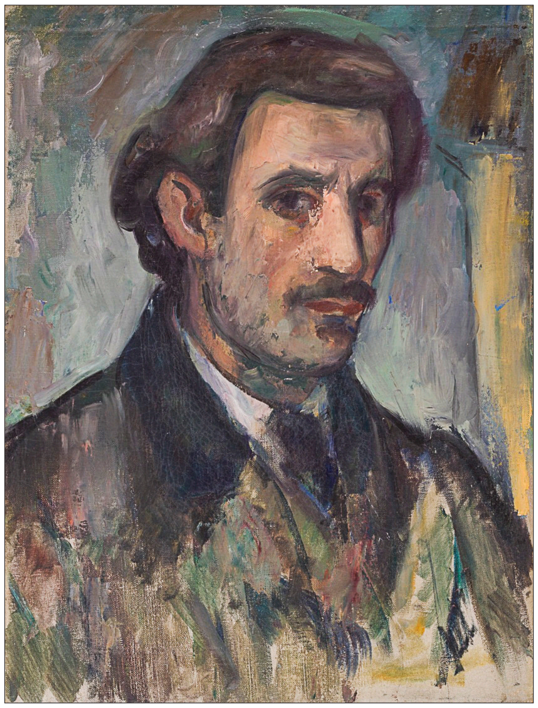
Peter at age 1

So as you can see, since I was so young, I really have little idea of what things were like for people during the Great Depression.

My mother was always interested in Art. She started her studies in Boston. She had a little problem, however, because her hair was too short. The school had a rule that ladies could not have bobbed haircuts. So my little mother, who was about 5 feet tall, had to leave town, being banned in Boston. She went to New York and enrolled at the New School. Her hair was OK with them.



Helen Johnson in the mid-1920s



Arshile Gorky Self-Portrait, ca. 1927

One of her classmates was Arshile Gorky.* He developed into a well-known painter. My mother told us that he was a little strange, but she liked him. She also said that he had painted her portrait, but it has not surfaced as yet. She was able to find work in textile design. She seemed to really like New York. One of her friends was a Ziegfeld Girl, and she came to visit us in Detroit once. Mother kept up her interest in Art all her life. She was an excellent craftsperson. Everything had to be perfect. I could say a lot more, but I will close with: I had the perfect Mom.

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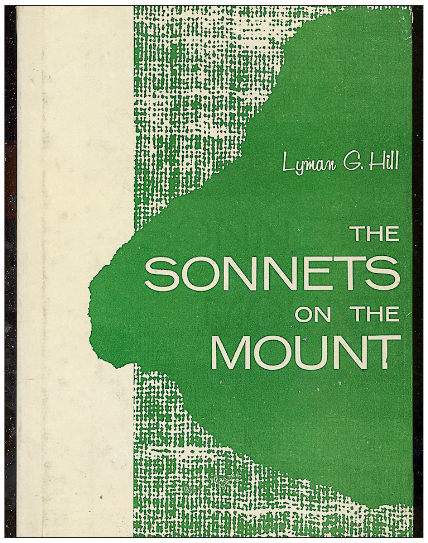
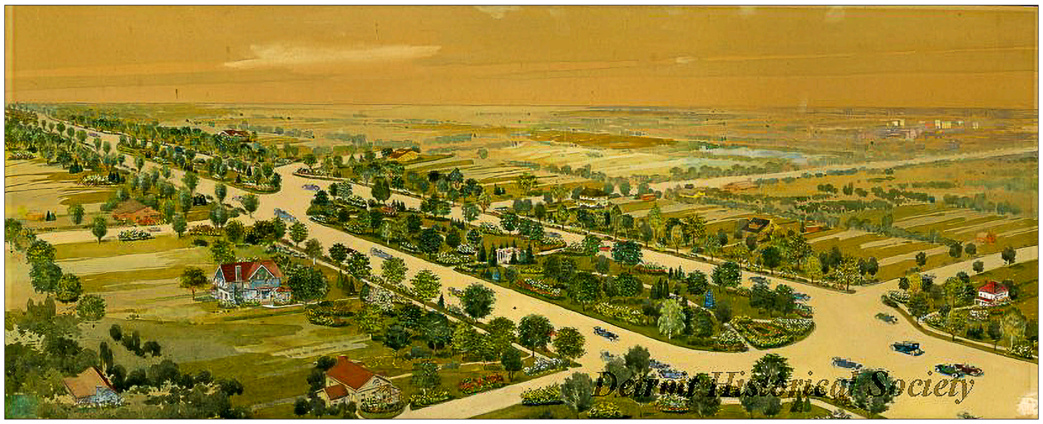
* Arshile Gorky (1904–1948) was a student at the New School in Boston between 1922 and 1924. He moved to New York City in 1926, where he taught painting at the New School of Design.

Lyman Gilman Hill, Sr., 1960s



My father was a very reserved person. He never drove a car. He never missed work that can remember. In Detroit at this time a two-car family was very rare. The public transportation was very good and cheap. He would come home from work, and after dinner he would go for his favorite chair for study. He liked to study History. He had an idea that children should be in bed by 6 o'clock. That idea wasn't very popular with my brother and me. My father liked to write poetry and work math problems. I found that the poetry interest was understandable, but math problems seemed a little unrelated. He had a sister in town, but we really didn't see her very much.

He did like to walk, and he would take me on long walks. He would say "two fingers," and that meant that I should hold onto his two fingers because my hand was so small. He liked to walk along Oakland Boulevard because it had lots of trees and it was very well kept up.*



Oakman Boulevard ca. 1920

Springtime along Oakman Boulevard, 1940s

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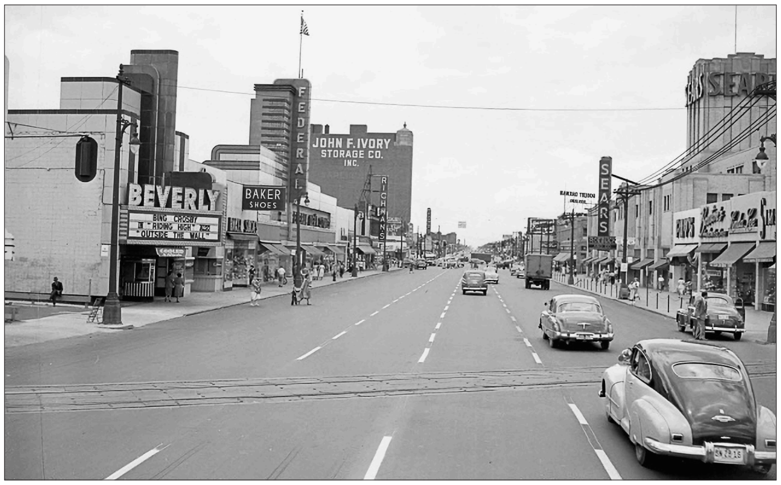
* Although Detroit did and does have an "Oakland Boulevard," it was never known for its trees or being well-kept. My father likely meant Oakman Boulevard, pictured above.

What was my life like as a kid growing up in Detroit in the 30s, 40s, and 50s? Detroit was the fourth-largest city in the United States at this time. It was a very different place in those days than it is today. A kid could go anywhere and no one was afraid that something bad might happen.

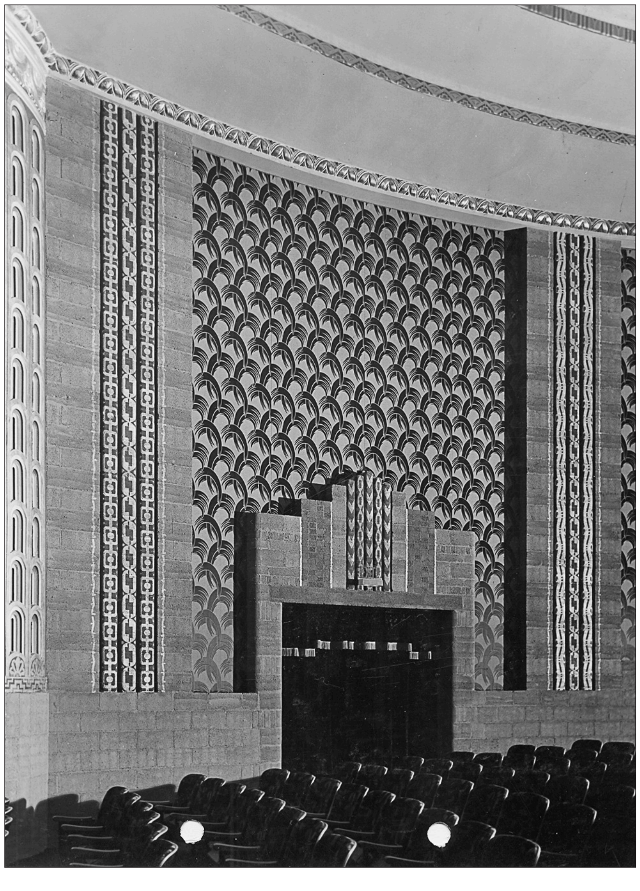
I loved to go to the movies. You could see a double feature for 10 cents. Saturday was the end of two features and Sunday would be the day that a new program would begin. Sunday to Wednesday and Thursday thru Saturday is the way it worked. The movie house, The Beverly, was within walking distance, so it made it very easy to take in four films each week. If the first film was really good you could sit through it again if you had time, and I did that often. They were both first-run films by the time they worked their way out of town. The Beverly was about halfway until they were ending their run in Detroit.



The Beverly Theater and Sears on Grand River Avenue

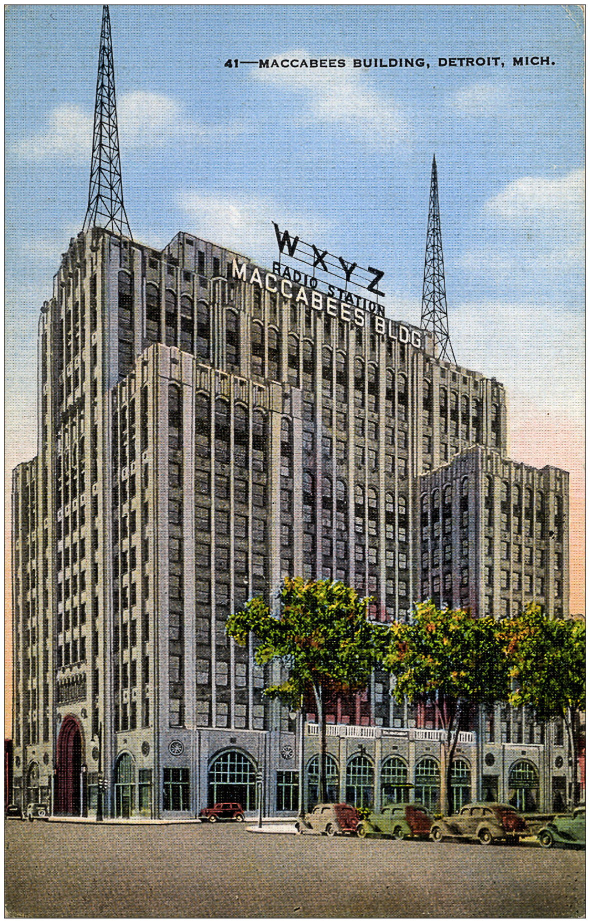
BEVERLY
Lamps of China

Box office of the Beverly Theater



Ornate doorframe inside the Beverly Theater

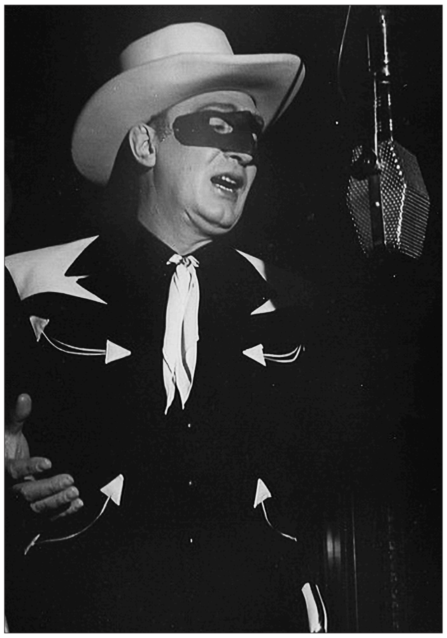
Auditorium of the Beverly Theater


41—MACCABEES BUILDING, DETROIT, MICH.
WXYZ
RADIO STATION
MACCABEES BLDG

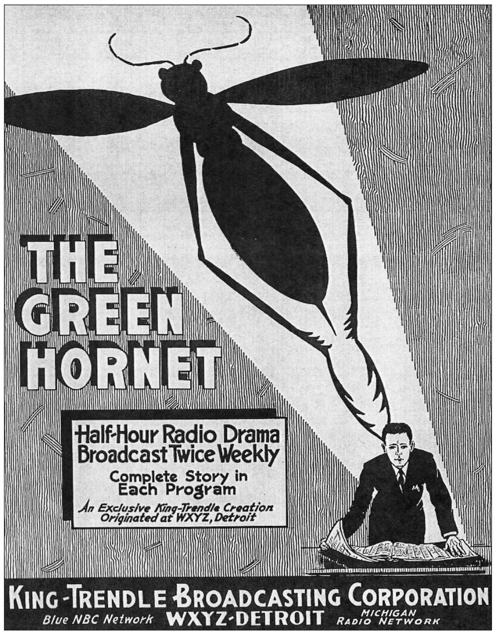
Maccabees Building, Broadcast Center of WXYZ, Detroit, Michigan

As a little kid I was sick a lot and missed school so that I had to stay back one semester, which put me behind a half a year. I never was a great student, but I did like learning so I did OK.

While I was in bed getting better it was Radio Time. No TV. We had radio and it kept your interest. The soaps and the adventure series ran day and night. *The Lone Ranger* and *The Green Hornet* were all part of the fun on WXYZ, and I think they both started in Detroit.* *The Breakfast Club Show* and *The J. L. Hudson Company Show* were a big part of my morning. Bob Hope, Fred Alan, and a whole bunch more made it almost fun being sick. My Dad listened to only two shows that I remember, *Drew Pearson* and *Monday Morning Headlines*. He wasn't much into radio and this carried on into TV. On TV he would find the ads in the program a little confusing as he thought they were part of the story. He would rather read. I have a lot more to say about what I did as a kid, but I think right now I will stop.



Brace Breemer as the Lone Ranger


THE GREEN HORNET
Half-Hour Radio Drama Broadcast Twice Weekly
Complete Story in Each Program
An Exclusive King-Trendle Creation Originated at WXYZ, Detroit
KING-TRENDLE BROADCASTING CORPORATION
Blue NBC Network
WXYZ-DETROIT
MICHIGAN RADIO NETWORK

J. L. Hudson Company, Detroit

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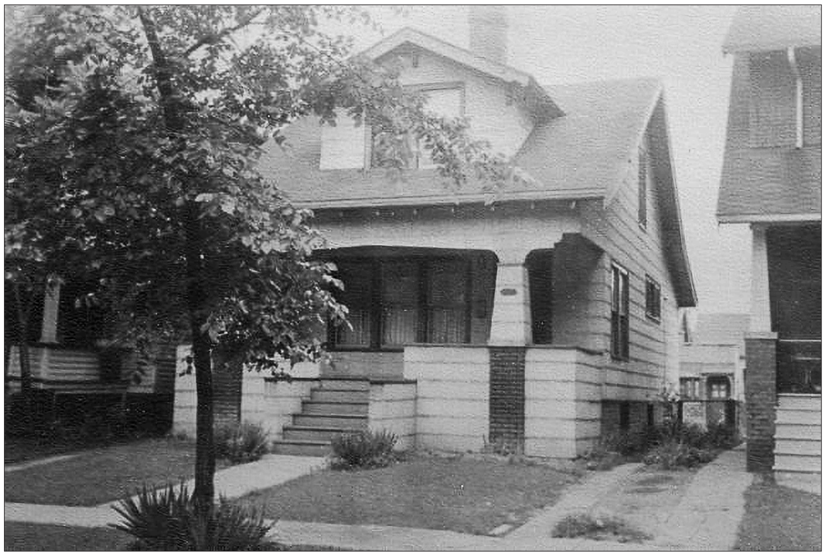
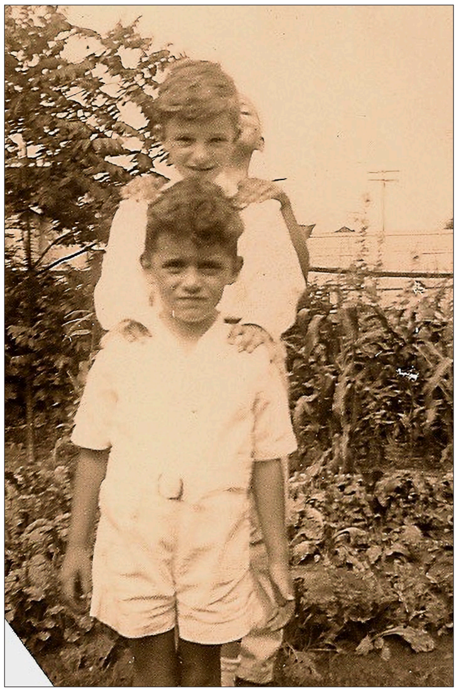
* True! Station WXYZ in Detroit originated both shows. By 1939, about 20 million Americans (15% of the total population) listened to *The Lone Ranger*.

This brings me up to about age 8. Around the area where I lived were fields and a small swamp that had all kinds of wonders for a little guy. I could go anywhere and it was OK. There were lots of snakes and one time I had as many as 28. I even took some to school and put them in my locker. I used to carry them (not all) in my shirt, as they liked to be warm. The swamp must have been spring-fed. It was full of frogs, tadpoles, turtles and all kinds of insects. I was interested in it all.

Peter with a bow and arrow, c. 1938

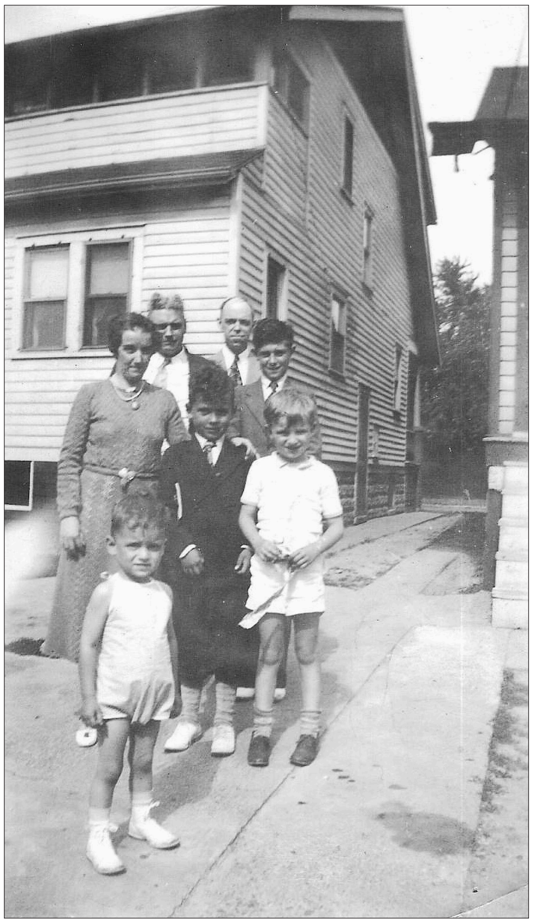


Peter Hill's childhood home: 9695 Burnette St, Detroit, MI



Peter and Lyman Jr.

My brother Lyman Jr. was enough older that we didn't interact much. We did share a bedroom. I will have more to say about our relationship later on, when the time makes us on about the same level.



Clockwise from front: Peter, Helen, Charles Bean Sr., Lyman Sr., Charles "Chuck" Bean Jr., Lyman Jr., Harry Bean. Chuck and Harry were Peter's cousins.

My Grandparents: I didn't know my father's parents at all, but I did know that his father, George Wallace Hill, died as a result of a kick in the head by a horse when my dad was about seven years old. I know nothing about my grandmother on my father's side, Annie Blanchard Hill.

Helen Johnson's family, l to r:
Helen, Ellis, Pauline, May, Louis

Peter Hill's maternal grandfather,
Louis Edward Johnson (1879–1962)

Now on my mother's side, that's different. Louis and Ellis Johnson visited us in Detroit several times, and I with my mother visited them in Massachusetts in the summer of 1941. My grandfather's business was in laundry and he ran the laundry in the State Prison. He had lost his own laundry business in a fire a long time before this and was not able to start again, so he had to get employment elsewhere. They lived in a big house on a circle on prison grounds but not within the prison walls. There was a pond nearby, and that was where I would spend most of my time. Even then I loved to fish. I dug worms with the help of a trustee who told me that he was in jail because he had not returned his book on time at the library. I did find out later that he was really in for murder. He was very nice to me and we were good friends. My fishing was nothing to write home about. I did catch a few small fish, a very big frog and a turtle. It was OK because I just liked being there. My grandfather told me that I was always being watched from the towers. He was a short, slight man with a very high voice. He had a lot of energy. He was a great Red Sox fan. There was also a nice pine forest by the prison. It was one that was planted and all the trees were in rows. I would build huts in the woods. That was also great fun and I always played the Indian.

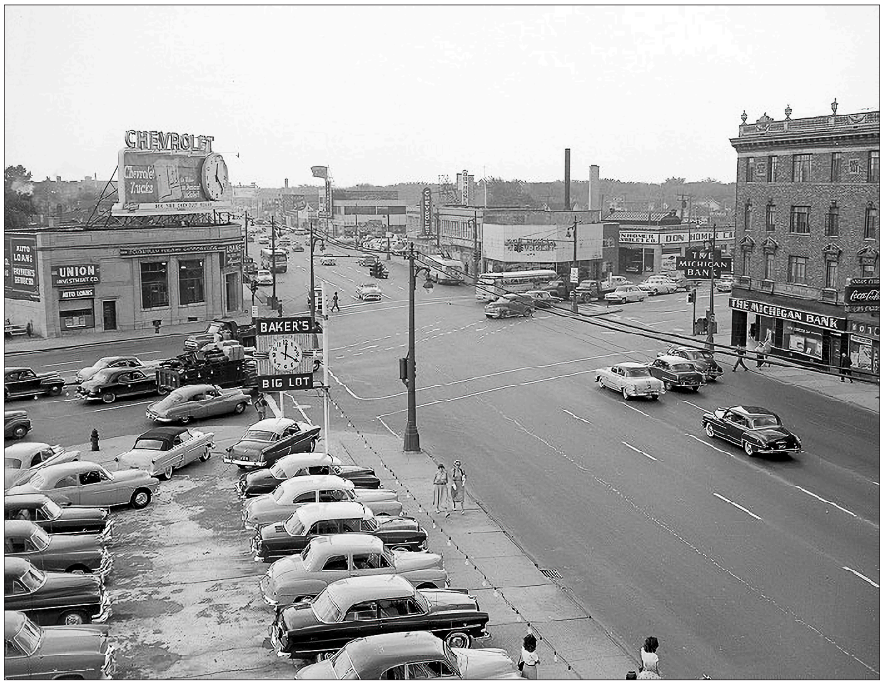
George Wallace Hill
with Lyman Hill, Sr., c. 1900

My grandmother was what anyone would think a grandmother should look like. She could have been on an oatmeal box. I really can't say anything else about her. I really only saw them about four or five times during my early years. She died before my grandfather, and he came to Detroit several times, and we would go see the Tigers play at Briggs Stadium. The Red Sox had to be playing at the time. Those were great years for both Detroit and Boston, and you could expect a great game when they played each other. We always sat in the bleachers. I can't remember the cost, but it was under five dollars to go to a Major League ball game.

Kids at a baseball game in Briggs-Tigers Stadium, 1942

Briggs–Tigers Stadium ca. 1930

Peter Woodworth Hill, Ruthruff Grade School



Intersection of Livernois and Grand River Avenues in the 1940s, roughly a five-minute walk from Peter's house

I went to Ruthruff Elementary School. It was an old brick building on the corner of West Chicago and Livernois, which were main streets in Detroit in my area. Because I lived on Burnette Street, I lived between Grand River and West Chicago. Livernois was interesting because it was lined with used car lots from Grand River up to about Five Mile Road. It was the longest used car lot in the world. My school was kindergarten through 6th grade. It was a nice small school and I was happy there. I think it is still there, hopefully still as a school.

I went to Tappan Middle School in the 7th, 8th, and 9th grades. This meant that I didn't go to the high school until the 10th grade. This was an interesting time for me, but I am getting ahead of myself. I really did not want to go this far right now because I am skipping right past the war years.

What was it like in Detroit when I was a kid? Very different than it is now. I could go anywhere on public transportation by myself with no worry at all. Detroit was the fourth-largest city the United States. It was the center of the auto industry, and there seemed be enough work for most of the people. The mix of people in my area was German, Italian, Polish, Irish, Czechs, etc., to just mention a few. They were almost all what you would call working-class people. The houses varied from small to pretty good size. There were lots of kids around. Even though I was one of the youngest, I still was able to keep up. We all seemed to get along pretty well.

Community baseball diamond at Livernois and Elmhurst in 1940, probably a ten-minute walk from Peter's house on Burnette Street

Streetcar storage depot in Highland Park, 1938

We had streetcars and buses to get us around. It cost a dime and if you got a transfer you could change from bus to streetcar as long as you didn't try to go back where you had come from. I spent a lot of time on buses and streetcars that were always very clean. No one at that time thought to vandalize public transportation. When it snowed the world was nice and white, but within a day it would be gray. The snow never lasted very long.

I would like to say something about streetcars. They were electric rail cars. Grand River was a five-lane street. In the middle were tracks that these cars ran on. Above them were electric wires, and a boom attached from the car to the wires ran the thing. They were very quiet and a great smooth ride. You had to stand in the middle of the road to get your ride. We were about five miles from downtown but from there you could see the buildings from the middle of Grand River Ave. As I said the streetcars were very clean and we sat on wicker seats. All the main streets had streetcars, but the two-lane streets just used buses.

This brings us up to 1941. My mother was very wise to buy a new car that year. It was a red Chevy, and it made for good transportation through the war years. I was eight at this time and I will continue walk down memory lane in the near future.

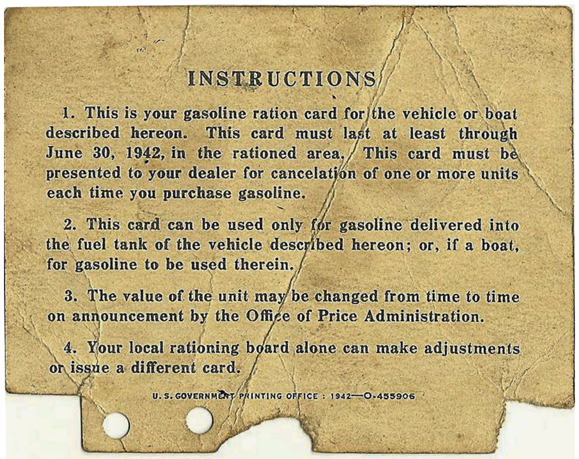
Streetcars taking Detroiters to a Tigers game, early 1930s

Streetcars on Grand River Avenue, 1941

Things did change in 1941. Detroit went to war, and so did everyone else. There were 1942 cars, but not many of them, for all industry turned to war production. My dad wanted to sign up and was very disappointed when they wouldn't take him. He was now part of the war effort being a chemist in service at General Motors. He even had his picture in *Look Magazine* to prove it.* We were all very proud of his importance. There were a lot of people moving to take jobs in all the major manufacturing cities. The Depression was over. It did seem a shame that it took such really awful war to do it. Being on two fronts it hit us right away with lots of changes.

Rationing of gas and food were the most felt at first. My mother's new car was kind of a stroke of luck with a C card, which meant that we could get just so much gas for the car. We also had stamps for food. I am not sure of what that meant in terms of how much, but it was enough. Car factories started to turn out more trucks, and some changed to tanks. The jeep had not been conceived yet, but it would be soon. Rubber was a big problem, and a real effort was being made to come up with something new. We had enough oil at this time, so not much was being done to look for other sources for fuel.

Dispensing rationing cards, spring 1942



INSTRUCTIONS

1. This is your gasoline ration card for the vehicle or boat described hereon. This card must last at least through June 30, 1942, in the rationed area. This card must be presented to your dealer for cancelation of one or more units each time you purchase gasoline.

2. This card can be used only for gasoline delivered into the fuel tank of the vehicle described hereon; or, if a boat, for gasoline to be used therein.

3. The value of the unit may be changed from time to time on announcement by the Office of Price Administration.

4. Your local rationing board alone can make adjustments or issue a different card.

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1942—O-455906

A gas ration card in World War II

As for me, I would be eight. I do remember a lot about the beginning of the war. In those days the newspapers would put out extras, and newspaper boys would be on the streets yelling "Extra, Extra, Read All About It." Every family that had a family member of age would be going to sign up. You could feel the tension in the neighborhood. In time there were a lot flags in the windows showing that that family had someone in the armed forces.

ALLIES LAND IN FRANCE!

Paperboy in downtown Detroit, August 1942

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*Believe me, I tried to find the photo.

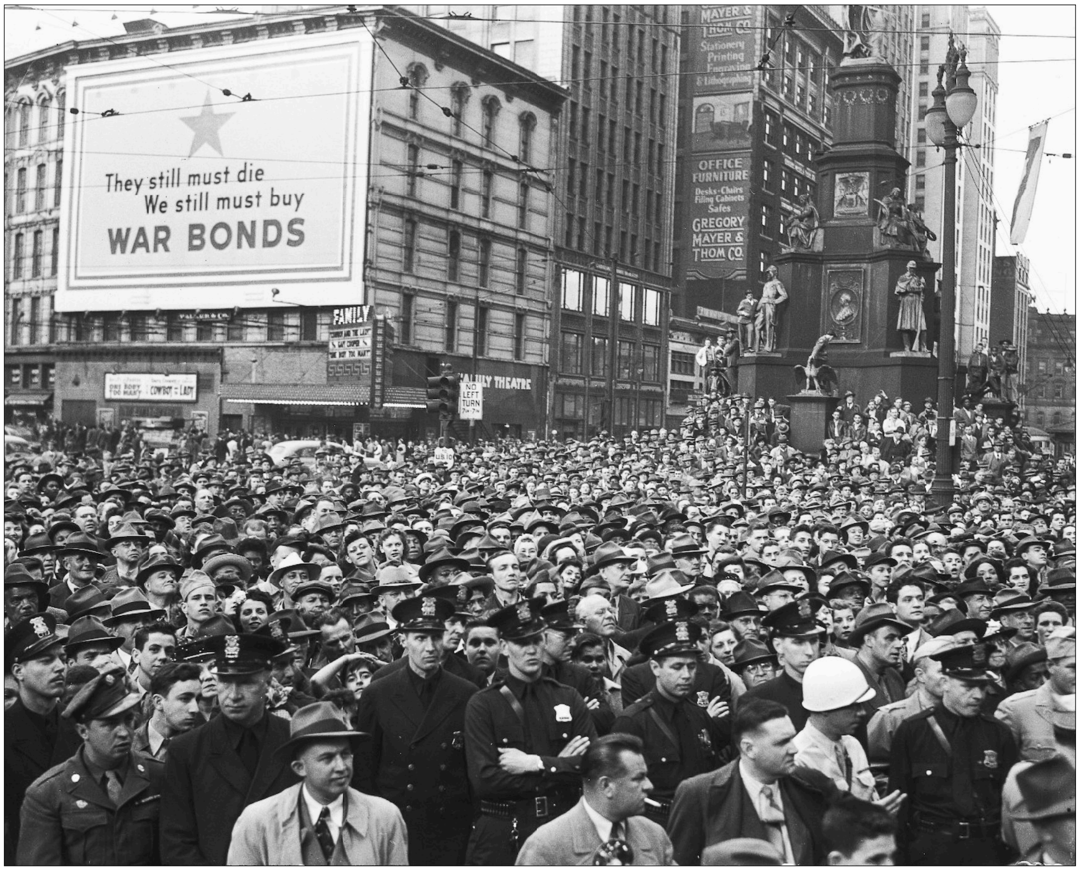
Detroit at night in May 1942

Downtown Detroit, July 15, 1947

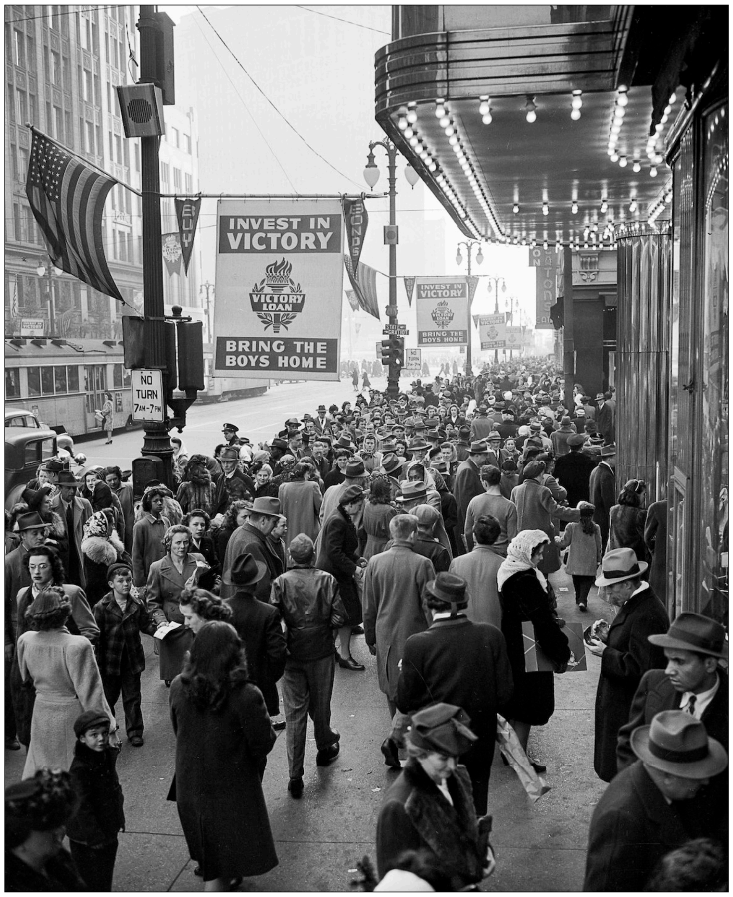
MY RUNNING DAYS ARE OVER
MY DUTY NOW IS
T ICK THE JAPS
MONTGOMERY WARD
MONTGOM

Wrecking crews burning the bodies of junked cars to simplify steel reclamation for the war, January 23, 1942

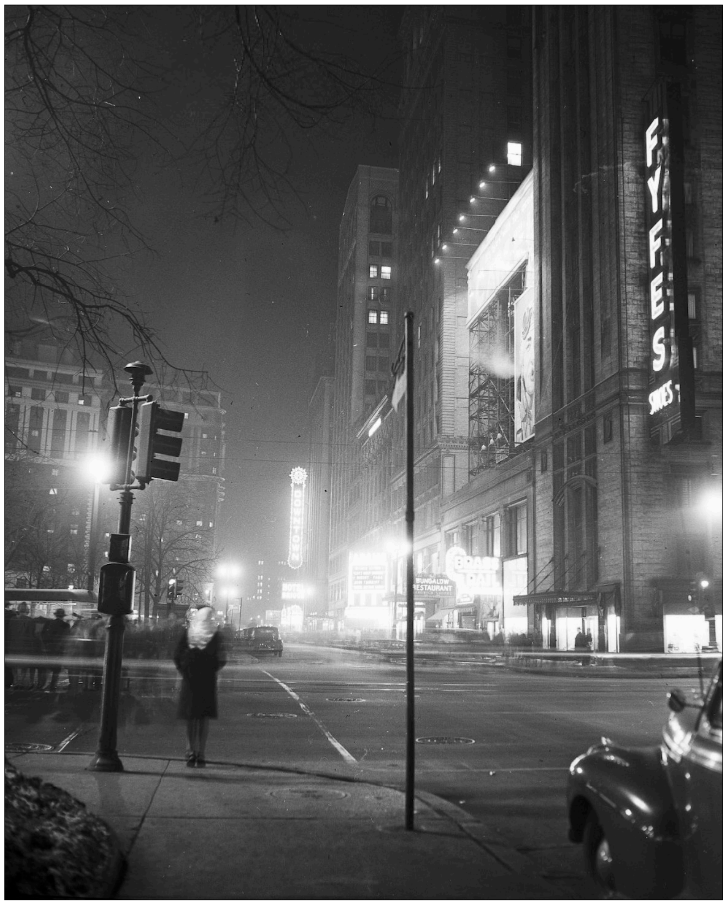
The Chrysler Corporation's tank-production arsenal in Detroit on July 4, 1942.


They still must die
We still must buy
WAR BONDS
OFFICE FURNITURE
GREGORY MAYER & THOM CO.
FAMILY THEATRE
NO LEFT TURN

Crowd attending a speech in downtown Detroit, early 1945


INVEST IN VICTORY
VICTORY LOAN
BRING THE BOYS HOME
NO TURN 7AM-7PM

Christmas 1944 in downtown Detroit



A brownout in downtown Detroit, 1945

P.T.
PAPER TROOPER
WAR BOARD PRODUCTION

My life, however, didn't really change much. Movies on the weekends, down to the swamp in the spring, and of course school. I was a paper trooper. You would get a stripe for so much paper you could collect. My mother would put them on my sweater vest. I was very proud of my war effort. My mother would collect kitchen fat and take it to the butcher for the war effort. The only family member that we had in the war was my cousin Chuck. He was my hero, and I will say something about him later on.

My ways really didn't change much during the years of the War. Went to school, did the movies on Saturday and Sundays, and my normal seasonal stuff. Going to the pond near the railroad tracks was something I really liked to do. In Detroit there were many places that you could find some natural water. Creeks and the Rouge River were sources that I was to discover in my limited travels around the west side of town.

Charles "Chuck" Bean in 1941

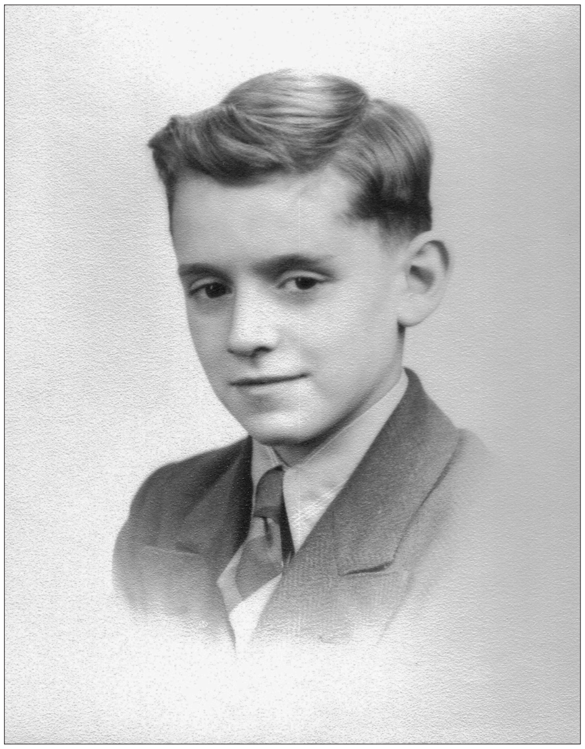
Chuck was 19 when he enlisted as a Marine. His first duty was Guadalcanal. He was in the 1st Marines. I don't think that I have to talk much about what happened there. The march in the Pacific had started and showed how this war with Japan was going to be a much different fight then the war in Europe. Most of the 1st Marines after Guadalcanal were mustered out of the service because of the awful conflict that was that battle. Chuck got lucky. He got sent to hospital with malaria. He got reassigned to the 4th Marines and was sent to Saipan. He got wounded in the foot. After that, when he got better, his luck held and was sent to Iwo Jima. It was with great fortune that he got through alive. You can see why I thought of him as my hero. After the war he spent time with my family. His father had died and his mother was unable to take care of things. He had a brother named (Harry) Buddy. I don't remember him living with us, but I do remember him wanting to enlist in the service and Chuck taking him to the VA hospitals and showing him what can happen to men who go to war. Buddy died in battle in Korea.

When Chuck lived with us he painted our house and did some repairs. The painting was mostly trim and front porch. The sides of the house were what I remember as asbestos and didn't need paint. In all the years we lived in that house it had never been painted. My dad was never into housework, and his idea of a yard was to dig it up and have a big flower garden. He really didn't like weeding so it all really looked rather strange. My mother liked to do projects around inside the house. She liked to paint and do wallpaper, so as a child I saw her at work a lot making things look nice.

Another story that I remember about Chuck's war events was a place called ROI Namur. I may be wrong about all of this, but as I remember the story, the island was a base for Jap[anese] Sub[marine]s to get resupplied. The assault would have been difficult if the Marines were to go in head-first, but the frogmen were able to cut a mesh that could be removed when the subs came to refit. The Marines got in and came around to the back of the defenders. This made for a nice clean quick battle. All of Chuck's battles were neatly tattooed on this arm.

He stayed with us for a little while and went to school, but he had a girl named Dolores and he got married. He died on November 14, 2010 Dolores and Chuck were married for 63 years. You might want to know what he did between the war and after. He was a policeman for 25 years in Detroit.

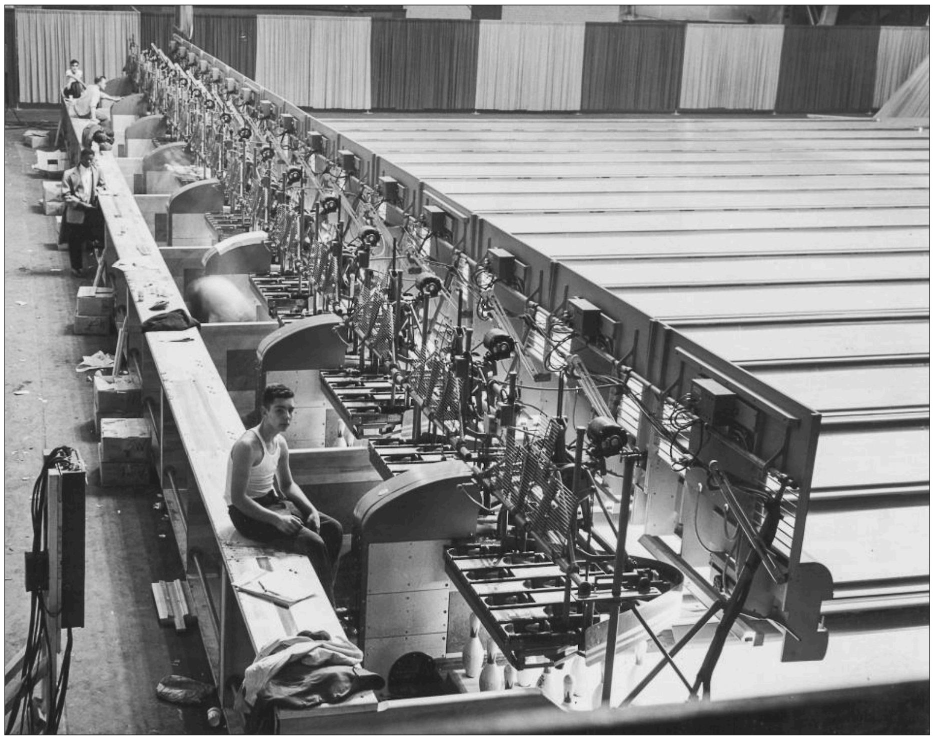
Peter with Chuck and Dolores Bean in 2010



I am at Tappan now in the 7th grade. This would be 1946. Tappan was across Grand River Avenue. The thing I was most impressed with was lunch. Lunch had a hot lunch complete with choices of meat, veggies and several desserts. I liked it all. There was one drawback, the lines were very long and you ended up with a very short time to eat. I hated that aspect of lunch.

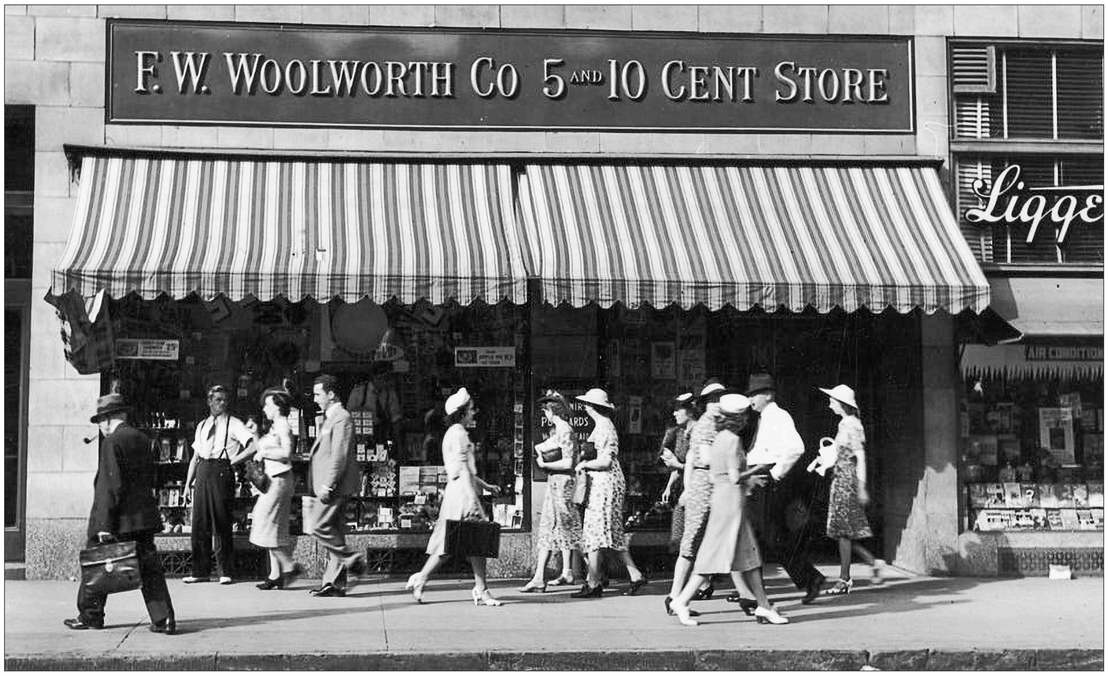
It was an easy walk, and I was able to make new friends, and life changed a lot in the next three years. I really begin to grow up after grade school. The subjects that you take are more interesting, and you get to pick what you are interested in. You still have the basics, but even at that you have some choices. Sports are more fun. I started to play baseball and played football in my neighborhood. I was the youngest kid doing this, but I could run fast so I was able to stay out of trouble.

At this time I got a little interested in money. Finding work at this time was difficult. You had to be at least 16 to be officially employed. I was somewhere around 12 years old, but I was able to make few bucks as a pinsetter at a bowling alley. After the first ball, you would put the downed pin in a rack that could be reset when you pushed the rack down. You had to move fast to keep the bowler happy. You would not want to get in the way of the ball. I had no problem keeping out of the way. Anyway, that was my first job, so I could say that I started to work at the age of 12.



Pinsetters behind a bowling alley

When you get older things look a little different to you. My neighborhood had its corner store. I was asked from time to time to run and get things, but usually by my dad. As I remember it was for razor blades. The store had a fountain for ice cream and related goodies. It was not big, but you could get most everything I might want: comics, candy, etc. I should have kept the comics. At a dime they would have been a great investment. Go figure. Next door to the corner store was a barbershop, and next to it was a bar, and a little further was a furniture store. The bar was called The Broker's Tip and I had no idea what that meant at the time. Detroit had lots of bars. Both ends on Burnette had a bar, and up and down Grand River you didn't have to walk far to find one. I had no interest in drinking. Even coffee to me was thought to be a sin.

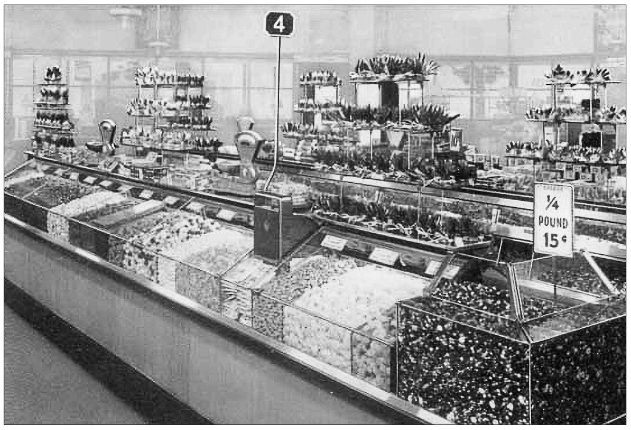


On the other side of the Beverly Theater was the Woolworth five-and-dime store.* There was a lot of stuff for five and ten cents. I got a small allowance, and I would circle the toy counter many times before I would part with my money. I am still a little like that. I don't know how many times I settled on sucker stick gun that usually didn't last very long, but no matter, as then I would have two guns for the price of one. Sears was across the street. It was said to be the most productive Sears store anywhere. I was to get work there, but that's later on in my story.

Children shopping at a Woolworth's Five-and-Dime in 1941

TOYS 24
TRACTOR 79¢

Toy counter at Woolworth's, 1941



Candy counter at Woolworth's, 1941

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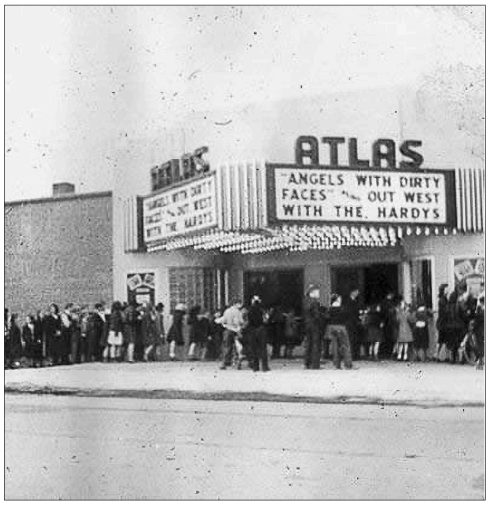
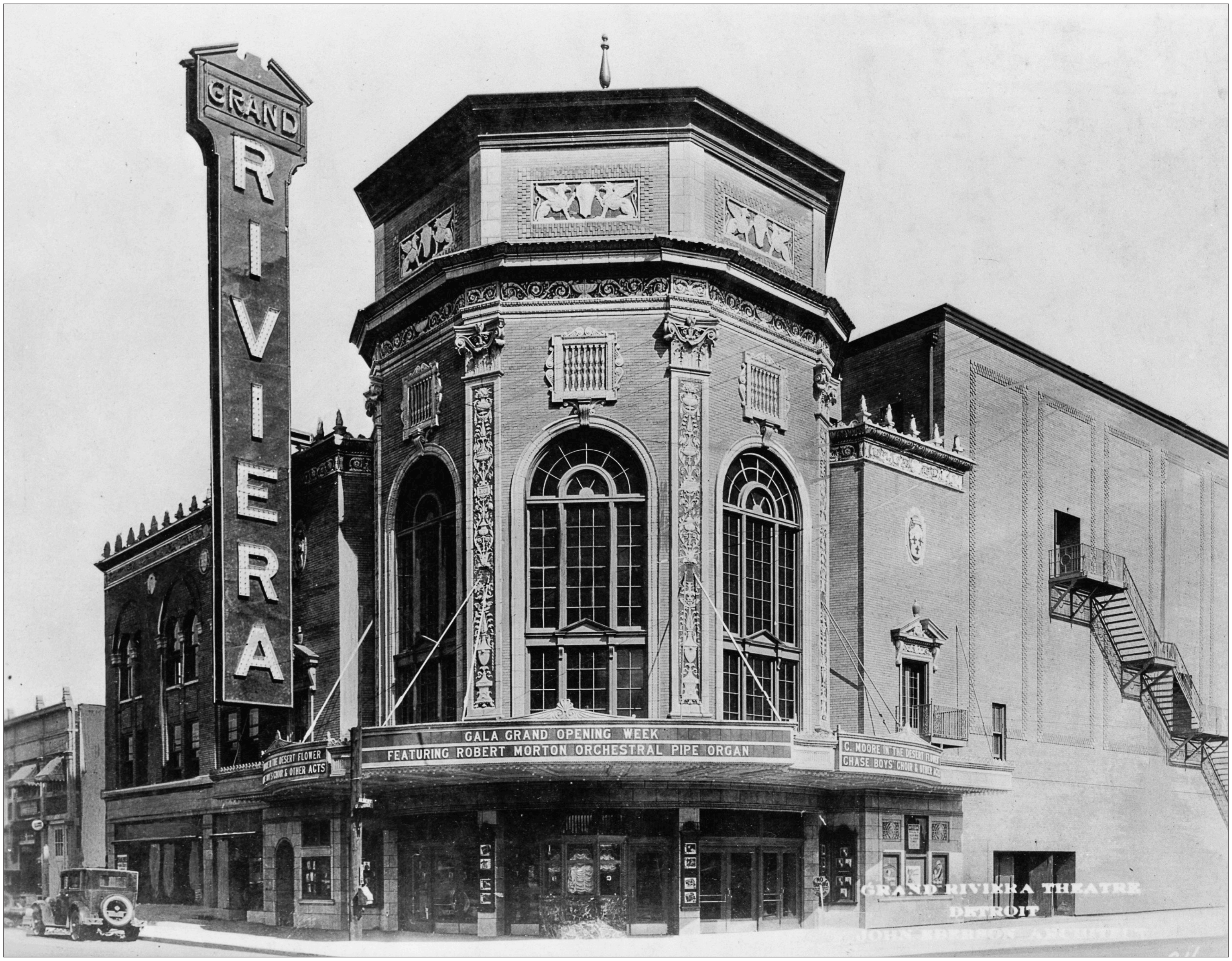
* None of these images are from a Detroit Woolworth's Five-and-Dime, but they are representative of what my father would have seen growing up in the 1930s and 1940s.

Going down Grand River toward downtown were three other movie theaters by Joy Road: the Riviera, Atlas, and the Rainbo. The Riviera* had the first-run films before they made it to the Beverly. The Atlas had the B pictures and the fun horror flicks like *The Mummy* and *Frankenstein*. The Rainbo did the Westerns. I pretty much stayed with the first-run better films. The Rainbo, however, got the film *Fantasia*, and that was something that I had to see. The theater was not big. It was very narrow with two seats on the right and about six on the left. They must have had a fine sound system because you couldn't get the film if you did not. That was a surprise to me for such a small theater to have what *Fantasia* needed to be seen and heard. *Fantasia* was not a big hit like most Disney films. I thought it was great.

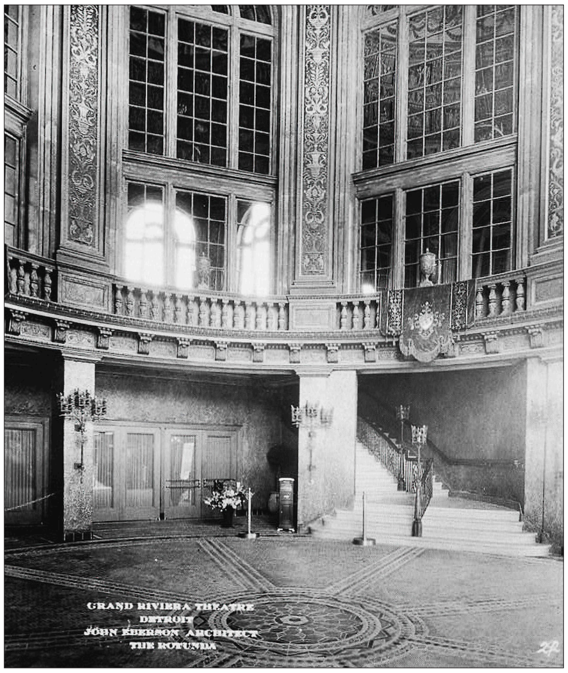

ATLAS
"ANGELS WITH DIRTY FACES" AND OUT WEST WITH THE HARDYS

The Atlas Theater, 1938

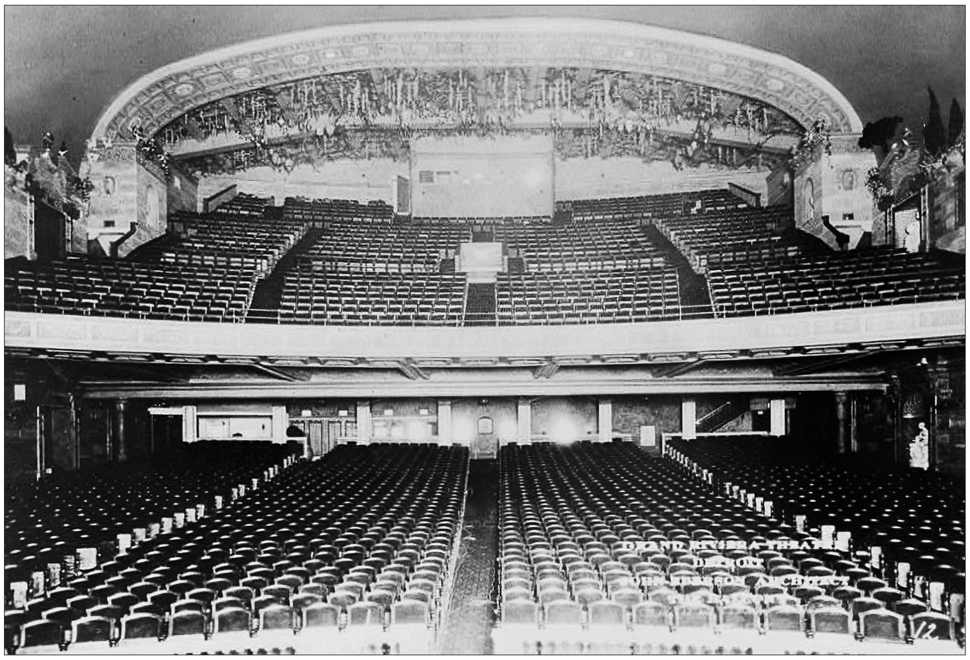

GRAND
RIVIERA
GALA GRAND OPENING WEEK
FEATURING ROBERT MORTON ORCHESTRAL PIPE ORGAN
THE DESERT FLOWER
CHOIR & OTHER ACTS
C. MOORE IN THE DESERT FLOWER
CHASE BOYS CHOIR & OTHER ACTS
GRAND RIVIERA THEATRE
DETROIT
JOHN EBERSON, ARCHITECT

The Grand Riviera Theater grand opening, 1925

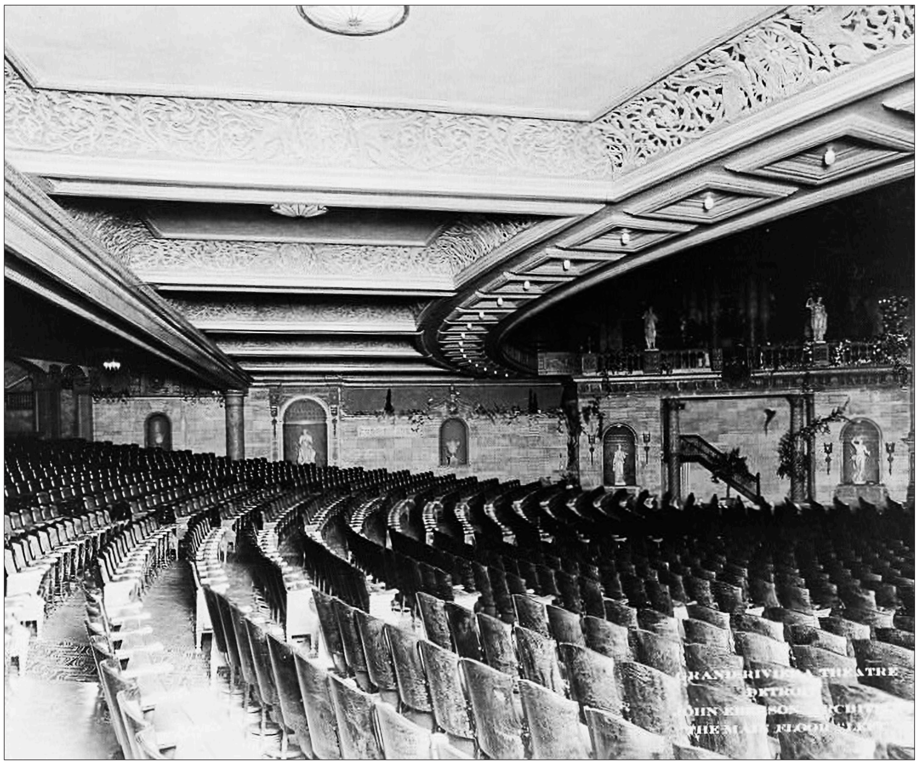
Interior of the Grand Riviera Theater, Detroit


GRAND RIVIERA THEATRE
DETROIT
JOHN EBERSON ARCHITECT
THE ROTUNDA

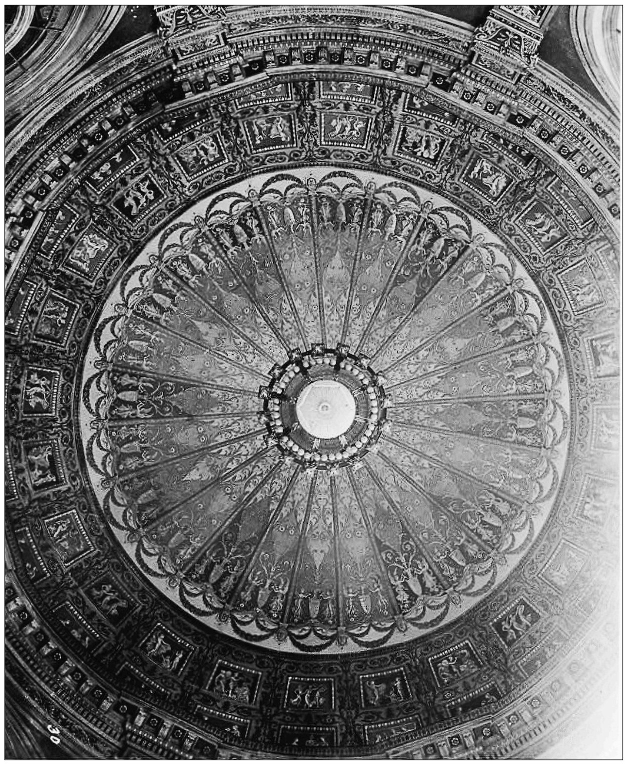
The rotunda of the Grand Riviera Theater


DETROIT
ARCHITECT

The auditorium and balcony of the Grand Riviera Theater


GRAND RIVIERA THEATRE

Under the balcony of the Grand Riviera Theater



The rotunda ceiling of the Grand Riviera Theater

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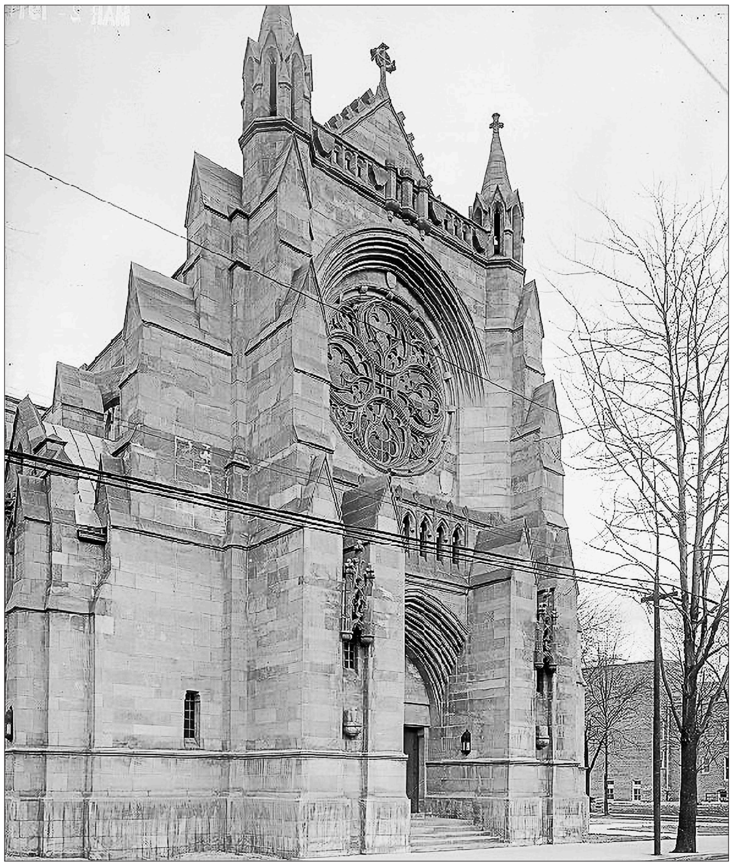
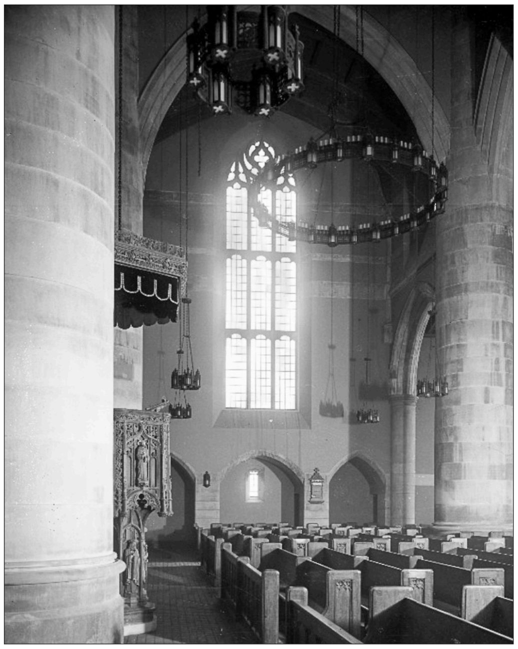
* This page shows interior views of the Grand Riviera Theater in 1925, its first year of operation. When I first saw these photos, I thought they couldn't possibly be of a movie theater. (In 2022, most movie theaters are air-conditioned warehouses with sticky floors.) But these are actual photos of the actual Grand Riviera Movie Theater from 1925. My father saw many a movie in this grand fantasy palace. No wonder he loved going to the movies.

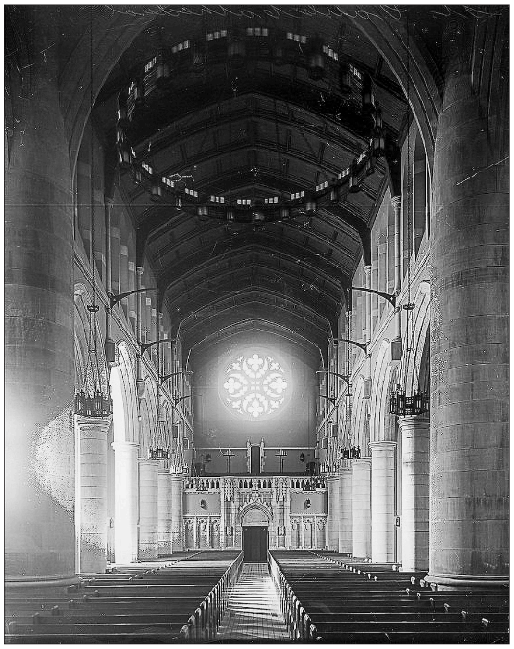


St. Paul's Cathedral on Woodward Avenue in Detroit, MI

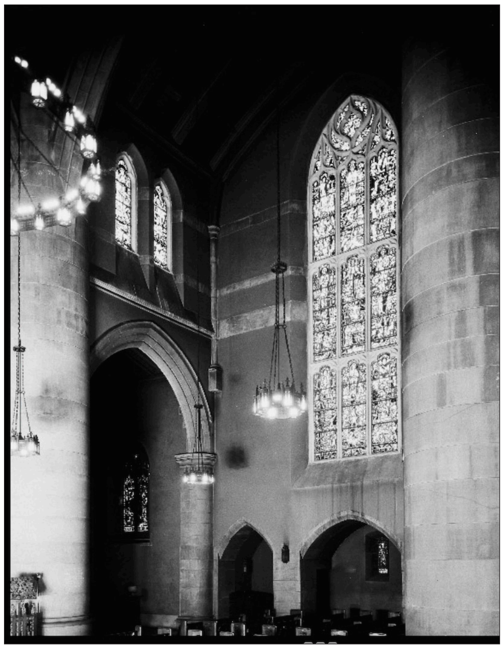
I am going to leave my travels and go to church. I was a choirboy for eight years. The church was Saint Paul's Cathedral on Woodward Avenue. It was near Wayne University, the Main Library, and The Art Institute. I was pretty young when I started, so my mother would have taken me for practices and church services. We had two practices a week. One was on Friday nights and the other was during the week sometime. I think it was Monday. They had some paid singers, a tenor, baritone, and a very good boy soprano. I really wasn't much of a singer, but the choir was big so my voice could just blend in nicely. Our service was at 11 o'clock. Being Episcopalian, we spent a lot of time on our knees with just a hard bench to kneel on. It was very difficult to get though the service without pain. About the 7th or 8th grade my choir days were over. I really didn't miss it. On the days I went AWOL ["absent without leave"], I could go to the Art Institute or the library.* I really liked the museum, especially the ancient area, but it was all very nice and a lot better than choir practice. My missing practice didn't seem to matter much. I got to the church by public transport when I took myself. I would take the streetcar to Grand Boulevard and transfer to the bus that would take me within a block of the church. It was easy and safe, even at night. As a member of the choir we were paid carfare, and this made a little extra money for me. It helped, for movies had gone up two cents and then the price was raised five cents.



Looking toward the pulpit



St. Paul's Cathedral, interior



The booth windows

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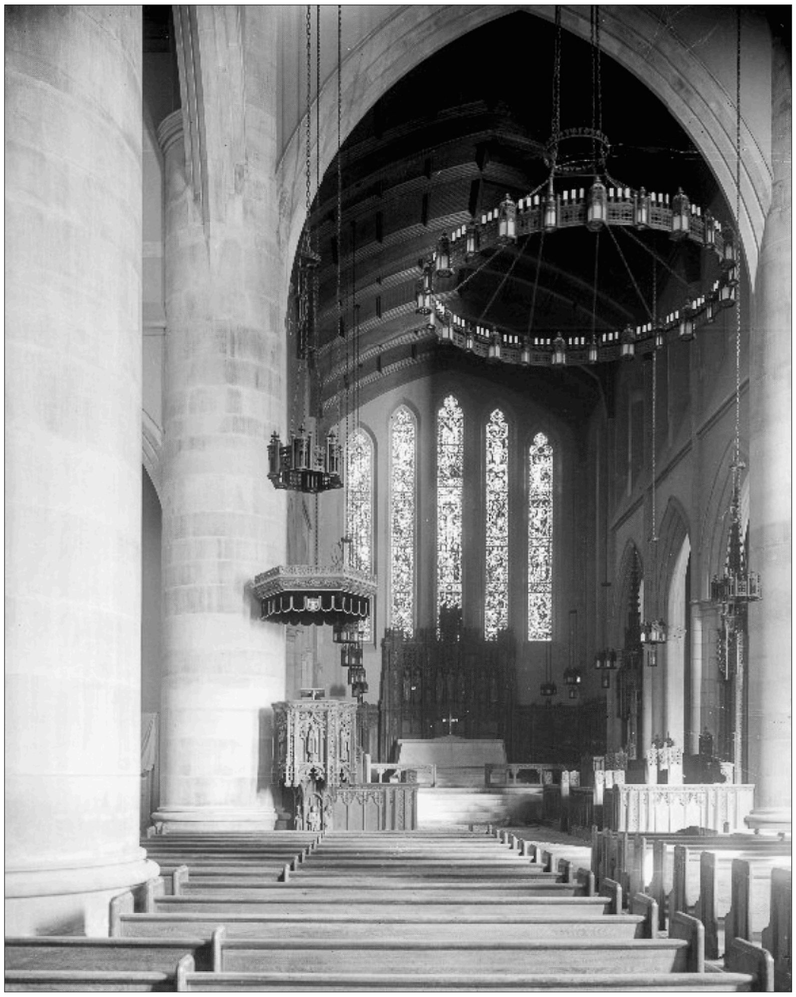
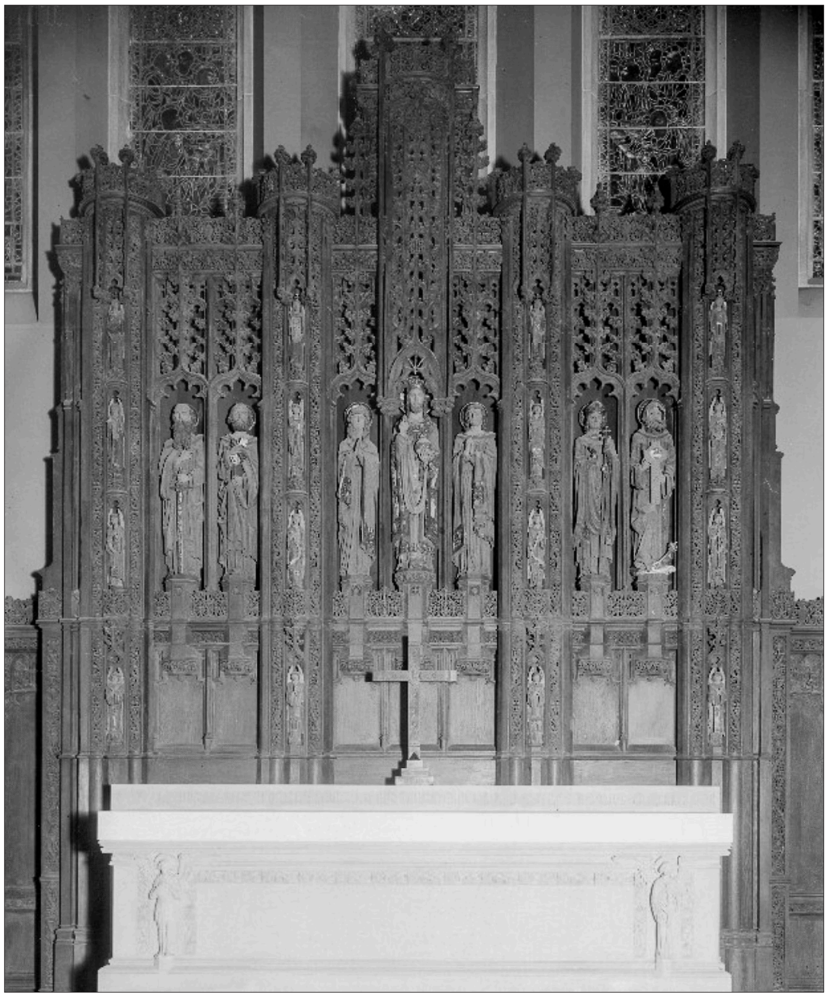
* See pages 498 and 499 for images of the Main Library and Institute of Arts as my father would have seen them.



Facing toward the altar of St. Paul's Cathedral, 1932



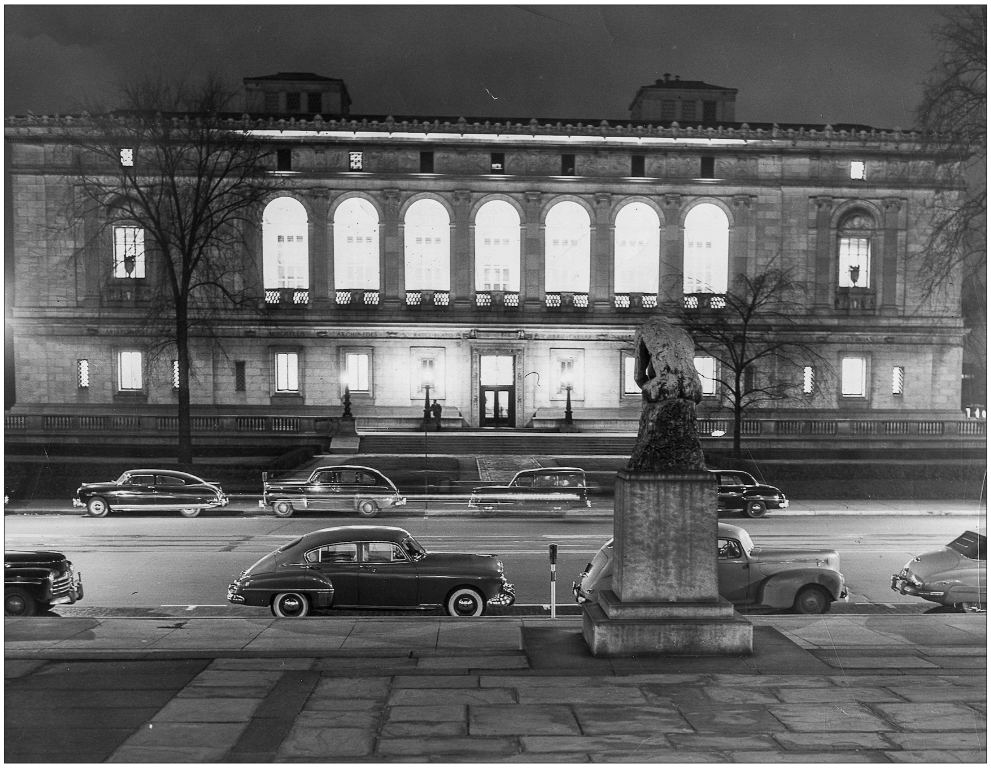
The altar of St. Paul's Cathedral, 1911

The church was what a cathedral should be. It was modeled after English Gothic. Inside there was a lot of good stained glass, woodcarving, huge columns, and some tapestries that were supposed to be designed by Raphael. Off to the side of the main altar was a small chapel that had an altar painting that I was very fond of. While I was a choirboy the ceiling got cleaned and revealed some coats of arms that had been hidden by years of candle burning. I had no idea who they belonged to, but they really looked great. I wondered why it took so long to get them cleaned up because they really added to the feeling of the church. The church was unfinished, but it did get completed after I left Michigan.

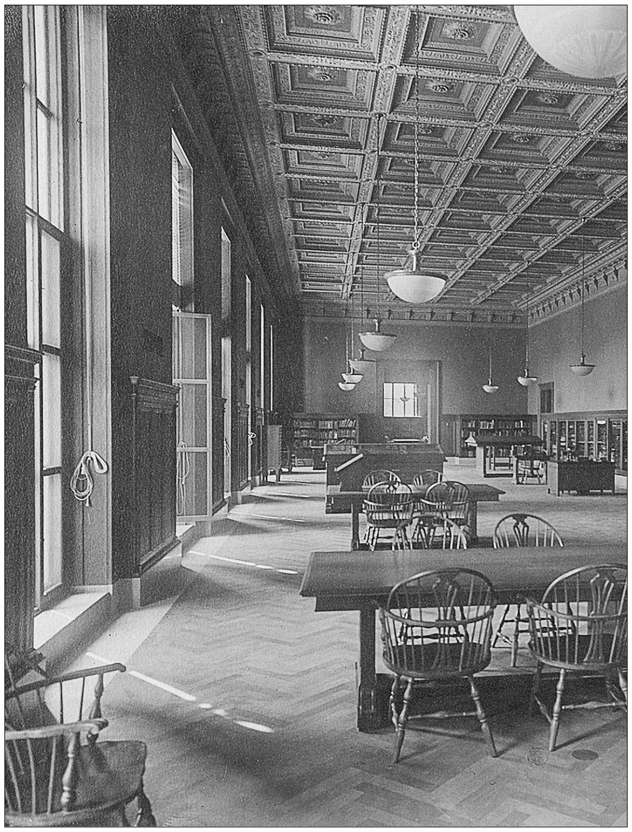
I think that it was on St. Andrew's Day that a Canadian Military Scottish Bagpipe Band would march down Woodward Avenue to Saint Paul's. I am not sure that they marched the whole distance, but from my vantage point it seemed that they really did. It was a grand sight with the sound of the bagpipes and drums and the smart marchers in their wonderful uniforms. We must have had enough Canadians that came over from Windsor for our church services as we always sang "God Save the King" as well as our own national anthem at every service.

The pulpit of St. Paul's Cathedral, 1932

Main Public Library of Detroit, Michigan

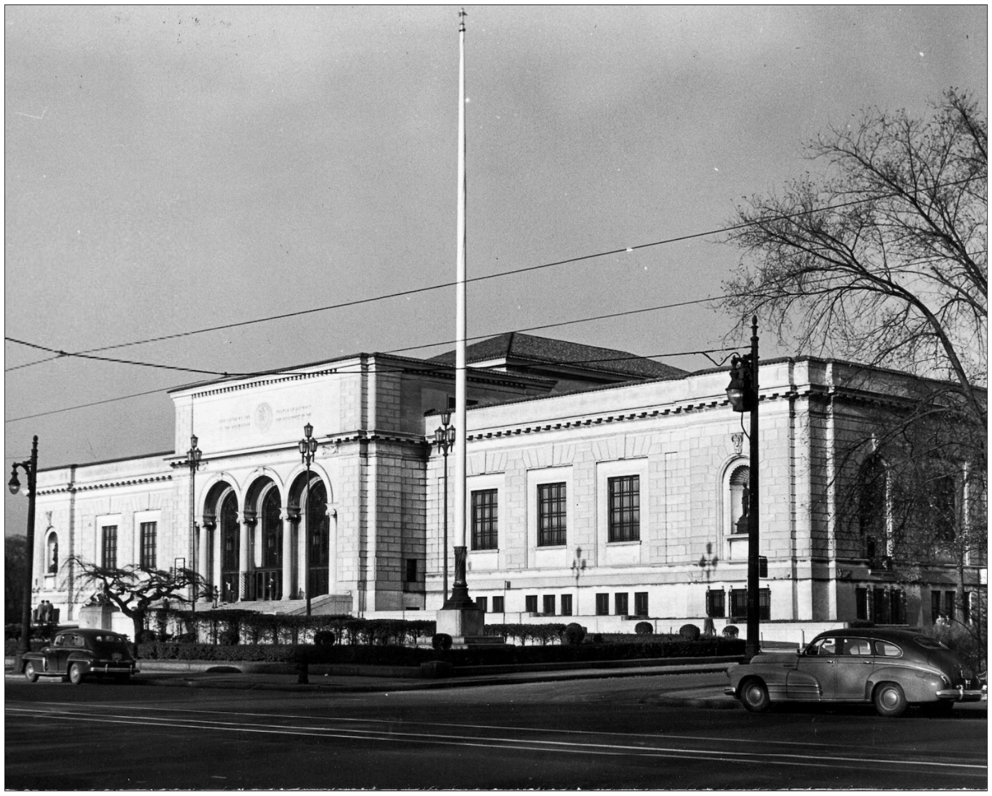


Detroit Main Public Library, 1950



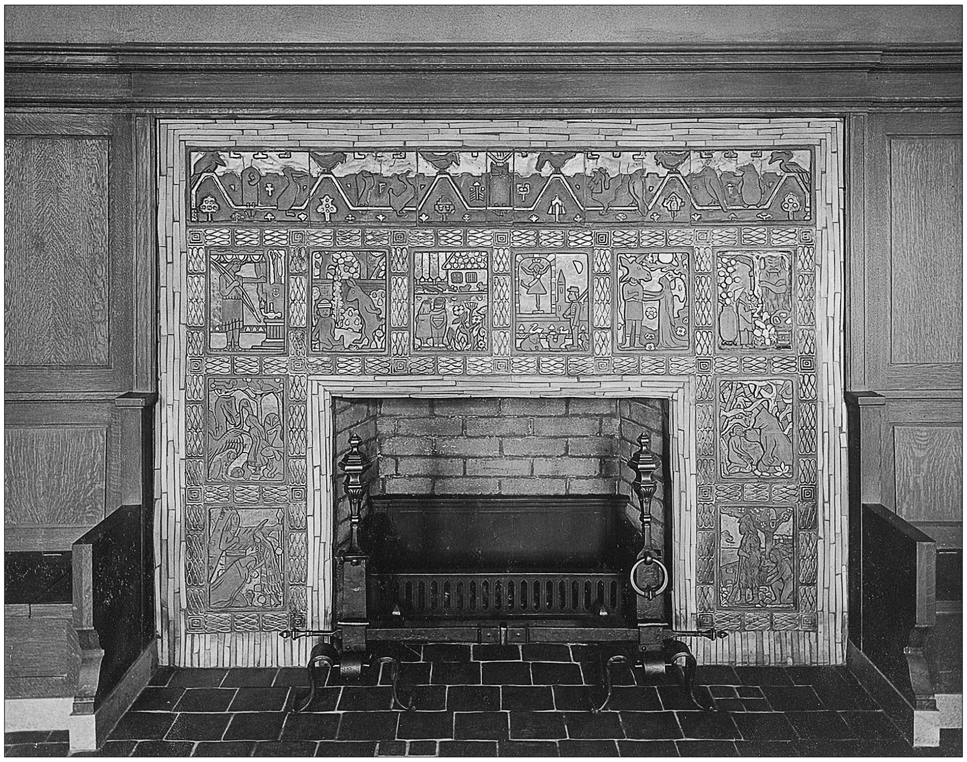
Reading room of Detroit's Main Library, 1921

The Detroit Institute of Arts

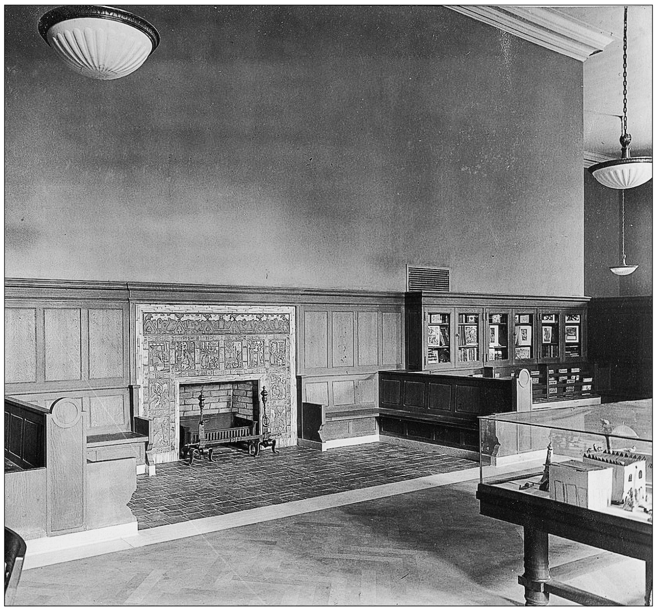


The Detroit Institute of Arts, c. 1939.
My father would display here *Pythian* in 1964, *Ulysses* in 1965, and *The Seal* in 1966.

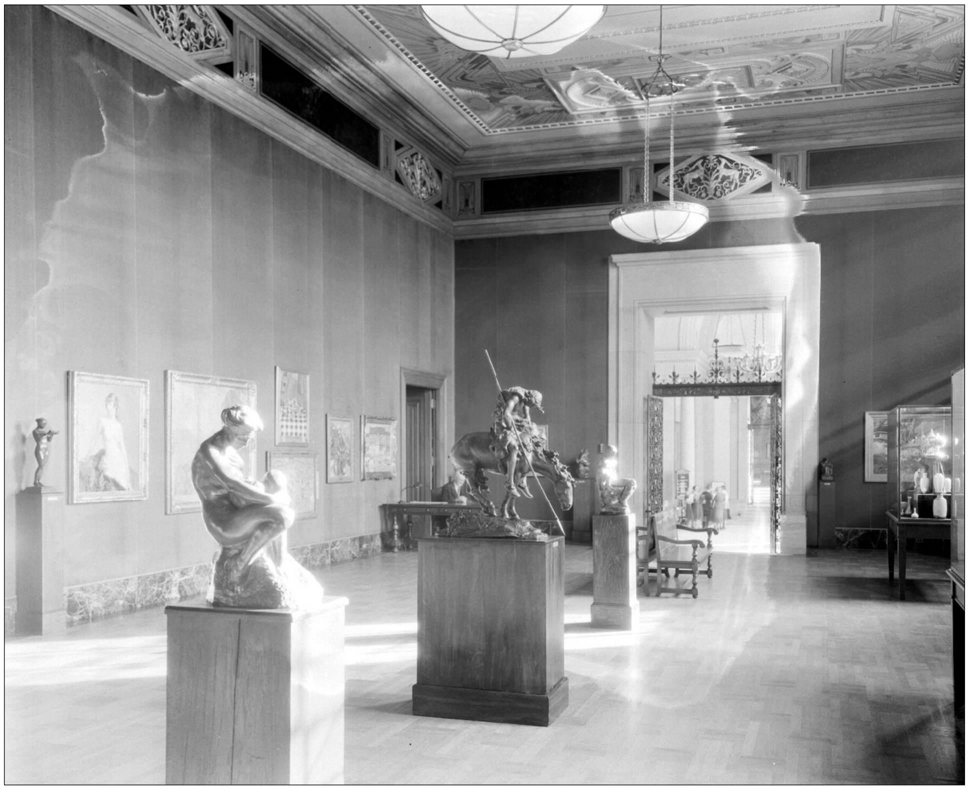
Mummies at the Detroit Institute of Arts, 1931



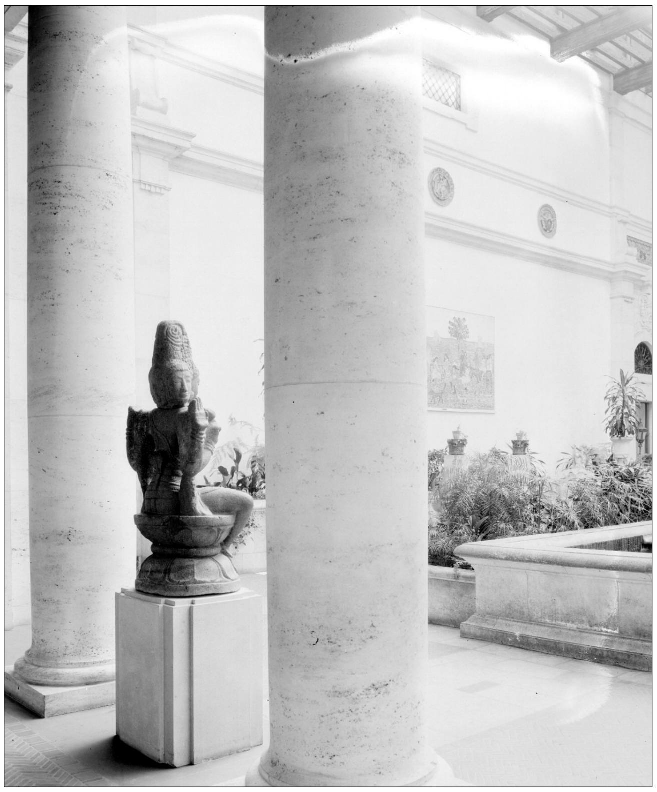
Fireplace in the children's room of Detroit's Main Library, 1921



The children's room of Detroit's Main Library, 1921



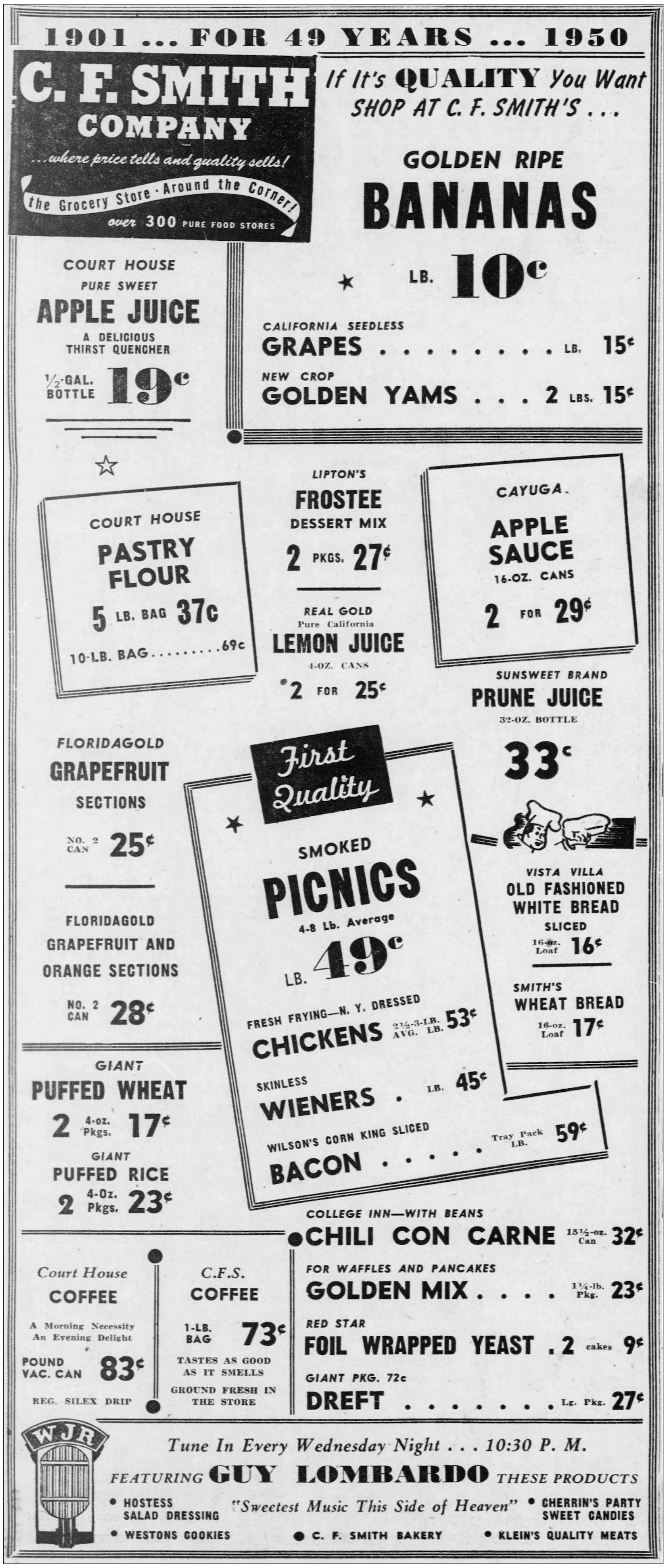
Sculpture hall at the Detroit Institute of Arts, 1931



Hall at the Detroit Institute of Arts, 1931

I think that it would be good if I talked some about my work in the late 40s and the early 50s. I went to school and I usually had a job to make a little money. I never had the idea that I would quit school, so money was not corrupting. My first jobs were in the grocery business. On Joy Road was a family-owned store that was really very well run by a Jewish family, and it seemed that I was the only non-Jewish employee. I was a usual suspect most of the time because I could correctly add on the bag. I worked in produce and it was high-end stuff. The best berries in world, so I thought, were in this produce department. My job, among many others, was to pick over each pint and make them perfect. I would have a berry on occasion when I felt that it was just about one to throw away from the perfect pint. I really became a berry junky. The strawberries were huge and very tasty. I worked with a guy named Arnold, and he was nice. I must have worked there for about a year.

My next job was at the C. F. Smith Grocery chain. There was a store at the end of my street across West Chicago. It was a very nice place for my employment at this time. C. F. Smith was a large chain of small stores around Detroit. They just missed the boat in the food business. They should have seen the coming of the super markets and the unions. They had a few larger stores, but the A & P and Kroger Stores had a good footing, and C. F. Smith couldn't compete with them. Our store was very primitive, with an ice barrel for produce and woodstove for heat. I would not think that all the stores were like that, but some of the small ones must have been. They did have a cooler for luncheon meat, etc., that had to be cleaned out once a month. The produce was lettuce, carrots, beets, potatoes, and fruit. I did everything, stocking shelves, waiting on customers, and most everything else that it takes to run a grocery store. I worked mostly on weekends and after school. I got about fifty cents an hour. I do remember how nice it was when I got to a penny a minute. I was in high school when I had this job.



1901 ... FOR 49 YEARS ... 1950

C. F. SMITH COMPANY

...where price tells and quality sells!

the Grocery Store · Around the Corner!

over 300 PURE FOOD STORES

If It's **QUALITY** *You Want*
SHOP AT C. F. SMITH'S ...

GOLDEN RIPE
BANANAS
LB. 10¢

CALIFORNIA SEEDLESS
GRAPES . . . . LB. 15¢

NEW CROP
GOLDEN YAMS . . . 2 LBS. 15¢

COURT HOUSE
PURE SWEET
APPLE JUICE
A DELICIOUS
THIRST QUENCHER
½-GAL. BOTTLE 19¢

COURT HOUSE
PASTRY FLOUR
5 LB. BAG 37c
10-LB. BAG.........69c

LIPTON'S
FROSTEE
DESSERT MIX
2 PKGS. 27¢

REAL GOLD
Pure California
LEMON JUICE
4-OZ. CANS
2 FOR 25¢

CAYUGA.
APPLE SAUCE
16-OZ. CANS
2 FOR 29¢

SUNSWEET BRAND
PRUNE JUICE
32-OZ. BOTTLE
33¢

FLORIDAGOLD
GRAPEFRUIT
SECTIONS
NO. 2 CAN 25¢

FLORIDAGOLD
GRAPEFRUIT AND
ORANGE SECTIONS
NO. 2 CAN 28¢

First Quality

SMOKED
PICNICS
4-8 Lb. Average
LB. 49¢

FRESH FRYING—N. Y. DRESSED
CHICKENS 2½-3-LB. AVG. LB. 53¢

SKINLESS
WIENERS . LB. 45¢

WILSON'S CORN KING SLICED
BACON . . . . . Tray Pack LB. 59¢

VISTA VILLA
OLD FASHIONED
WHITE BREAD
SLICED
16-oz. Loaf 16¢

SMITH'S
WHEAT BREAD
16-oz. Loaf 17¢

GIANT
PUFFED WHEAT
2 4-oz. Pkgs. 17¢

GIANT
PUFFED RICE
2 4-Oz. Pkgs. 23¢

COLLEGE INN—WITH BEANS
CHILI CON CARNE 15½-oz. Can 32¢

FOR WAFFLES AND PANCAKES
GOLDEN MIX . . . . 1¼-lb. Pkg. 23¢

RED STAR
FOIL WRAPPED YEAST . 2 cakes 9¢

GIANT PKG. 72c
DREFT . . . . Lg. Pkg. 27¢

Court House
COFFEE
A Morning Necessity
An Evening Delight
POUND VAC. CAN 83¢
REG. SILEX DRIP

C.F.S.
COFFEE
1-LB. BAG 73¢
TASTES AS GOOD
AS IT SMELLS
GROUND FRESH IN
THE STORE

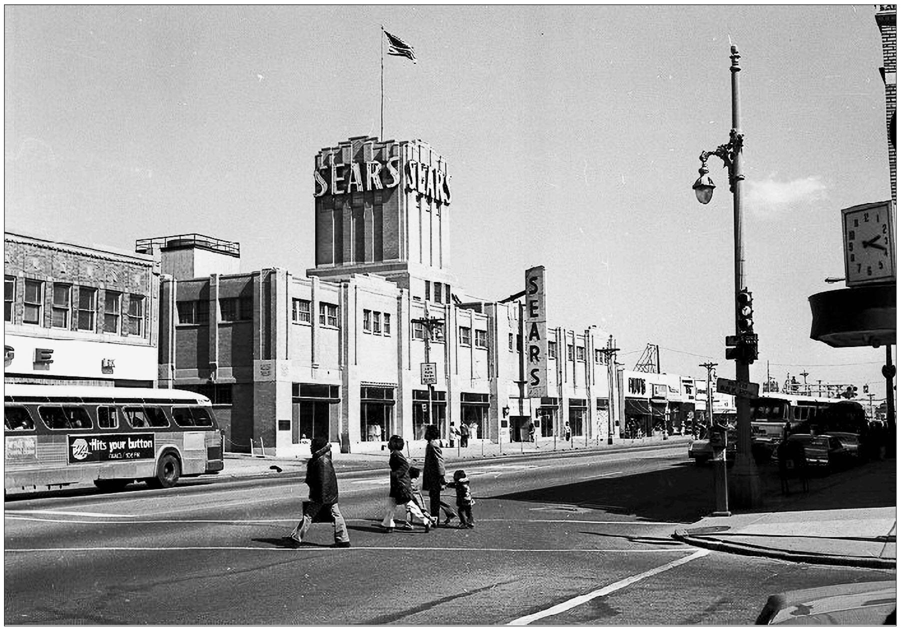
WJR

Tune In Every Wednesday Night . . . 10:30 P. M.
FEATURING **GUY LOMBARDO** *THESE PRODUCTS*
"Sweetest Music This Side of Heaven"

- HOSTESS SALAD DRESSING
- WESTONS COOKIES
- C. F. SMITH BAKERY
- CHERRIN'S PARTY SWEET CANDIES
- KLEIN'S QUALITY MEATS

The UAW [United Auto Workers] was able to unionize most of the workers in the C. F. Smith chain, and with that I was up to 98 cents. How cheap we had become. The chain could not last long after the union came in. Many stores closed, and employment status changed a lot. Our store stayed open, but our manager was let go and his boss, Mr. Trathum, ran the store. He was very old and not well. It was fall and winter when all this was going on. He really was not a very nice man, and he had been very hard on our manager. He was a district manager and had a lot of stores to look after. It was sad to see him in such a reduced state because he had to work a certain length of time to get his full retirement. Ed Spala and I were running the place when we could work. When we were there Mr. Trathum would sit near the wood stove just to keep warm. Ed could drive, so on the weekends we had to make home deliveries with the boss's car. He had a big ATO Buick. I am not sure what happened to him for it was not long before the store was shut down. I always hoped that he did retire soon because the ordeal was really very hard on him. Mr. Trathum was a very sick man. When the store finally closed an inventory was taken. Mr. Trathum was sure that the store was being looted. As it turned out the inventory showed a surplus. This gives you a little idea of his mindset. It was all very sad.

My next job was with Sears. It was a real step up. I worked in the linoleum and rugs and carpet area. Having carpet wall-to-wall was not common, but it was coming. I was a linoleum cutter. The idea of having inlayed linoleum was also rare. Linoleum rugs were common and were just laid on the kitchen wood floor with tables and chairs on top. The designs were about as bad as you could imagine. We always cut a little more so that when they got the rug home it could be made straight. Sears sold a lot of that product. It was good business and I was kept very busy. I think that I worked on Saturdays and some evenings. In the summer I was able to get more hours in. In those days most stores were closed on Sundays. It was considered evil to work on the Lord's Day.



The Sears store on Grand River Avenue where Peter worked

We got a pay envelope with cash in it every week. This is the first time I remember paying Social Security. I should look back to see the date, but know that I am in high school, so it must have been some time in 1949. I really cannot remember how much I made, but I do remember that I had no trouble spending it. I started to get interested in clothes.

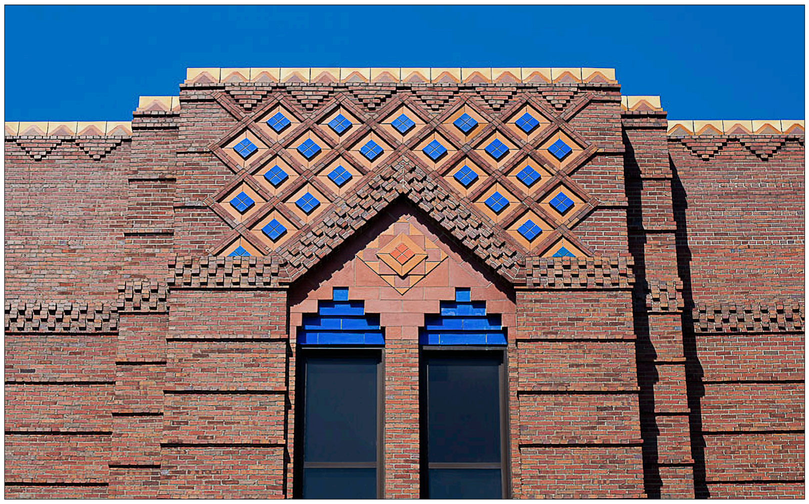
I graduated from Tappan in mid-year January of 1949 and at mid-year from Mackenzie High School in 1952. I got interested in class offices. I was President of my class in 1949 and 1952. When I think back I am still surprised that I did that. I am not fond of politics and how it is usually practiced. I will speak more on the subject when I get to my college teaching days.

I went to Mackenzie High School. In Detroit today they are closing a lot of their schools, and Mackenzie was one of them. I was very surprised when I heard this because I still think of it as being rather new. It was built some time in the 40s, I think. It is over fifty years old, so why am I surprised? The reason for all the closings is that Detroit has lost a lot of people over the years and they really don't need the schools any more, let alone pay for them. There is some thought of closing Cooley High. Would not Eddie Murphy* be upset about that happening?

Mackenzie High School

An entrance to Mackenzie High School

Mackenzie High School in the 1970s



Mackenzie High School; pewabic tile details along the roof

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* Eddie Murphy was one of the foulest and funniest comedians of the 1980s. Cooley High was the subject of a hilarious movie in the 1970s, but Eddie Murphy did not appear in it.

I was on a college prep program of study as was most everybody else. Going to college was not as expensive as it is today. The students were on double shifts. We would go about four hours to school each day. That meant that you could work if you had a job and you could work out a good schedule. I was to keep my Sears job.

I did go out for sports. Leo Grimes talked me into going out for track. He was a math teacher that coached the track team. I ended up running the 440 and the 220. I really didn't like track or the practices. I did OK, but didn't get into shape until the season was about over. In the fall I played football. In my senior year our track team was able to become city champs. It was something of a miracle. We had some very fine distance and middle-distance runners as well as some field people. We would never have meets outside of Detroit. If there was a state championship we were never able to participate, or at least in 1951 we could not compete. It was something of a miracle that we were city champs. By the time we got to the city championship meet we had less than twelve teammates left for the finals.

Pete White
Jim Clark
John MacKenzie
Larry Stanley
Pete Hill

The Mackenzie High School track team

Detroit had the East side and the West side. We were in the West, and when came time for that championship we came in either second or third. The city meet was next where West meets East. We had enough firsts and seconds to take it all. What happens is that the points per event get evened out and we ended up winning with a small number of people. I do not think that Mackenzie ever won another city championship in track.

Mackenzie High School track meet; Peter at right

Peter racing for the Mackenzie High track team

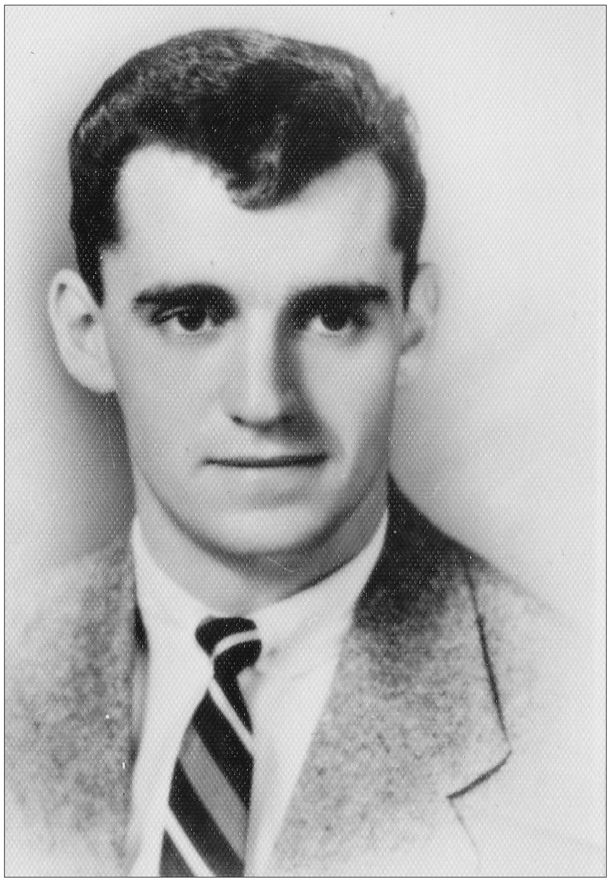
1948
John Galbraith R.E., Bill Little R.T., Hud Schuster R.G.
Vern Venner C., Tom , Pete Hill L.T., Graig Folk
Don McPhee L.E., Bob Knight R.H., Steve Stephanoff Q.B.
Jack Kushner F.B., J.D. Forest L.H., Ed Spala R.E. Bill Komar

In football I started on offense. My ankles were weak and I was out a lot, so the coaches thought that defense would be better. As a player I felt that this suited me just fine. I really would rather hit than be hit. I did not feel that I was very good at football, but it was the thing to do and I always liked to do what was best. My ankles went out twice on offense and not at all on defense.

I really did like my letter sweater. It kind of takes me back to my paper trooper days. My mother knitted it for me and then she could add all the stripes and badges that came along. The city championship in track was a gold stripe. My sweater was gray and when I left to college my dad liked to wear it. I got all the decorations off as he was wearing out the knitted part of the sweater.

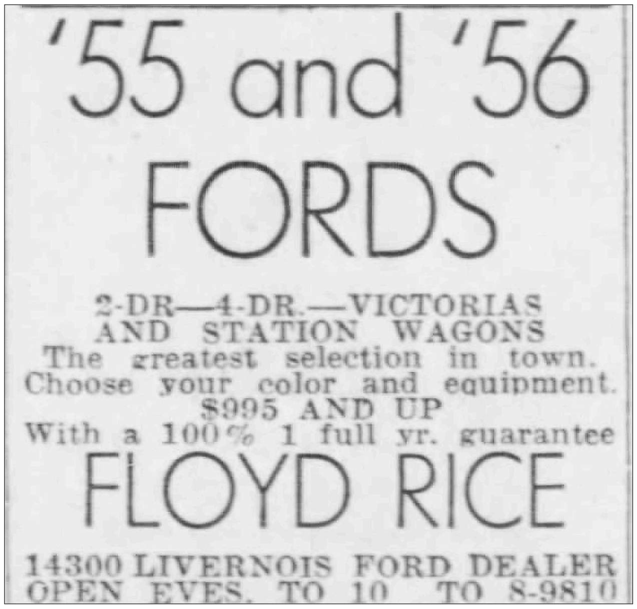
I do not remember much about my academic life at Mackenzie. I always went to class but had a hard time with math and science, especially the hard sciences. I did carry on my Latin for another three years. That became really invaluable when I was off to college. Physics was a complicate [sic] mystery to me. I did not do well at all and I was unable to run for class office in my junior year because of my low grade in physics. The rest of the coursework was OK, but not really great, but as I remember I was not really troubled by any of my academic life ever. I guess I just felt that what happens was just fate. Latin and the Romans got me through the hard times in the world of academics. I did find out here that I liked history, and the ancient world was a pure delight, and this would carry me through to this day.

I graduated from Mackenzie in January 1952. I decided to wait and work until I went to college so that I would be in a normal routine going to school. I wanted to go the University of Michigan but found out that they thought that I should try a school that was a little less demanding. This really didn't bother me much, so with my parents' help I decided to go to Albion College.



Peter's senior picture at Mackenzie High School

I changed my work efforts doing a very different type of work. I began by getting work in the auto industry. My neighbor Red Holman worked for Floyd Rice Ford Dealer and got me a job.* At first I was kind of a janitor keeping the service department cleaned up. It wasn't difficult, a kind of a no-brainer, but it paid well enough. My goal was to make enough in a week so that I could take care of some expenses when at college. In the summer I would work about ten weeks. This type of work took care of my summers while I was in college. I did move up, however, into sales [of] both new and used cars. One interesting thing happened when I was able to sell a car with insurance and payments. The salesperson got paid in silver dollars. Sometimes I would get bags of them. If I had only kept them all, but as it were I could not wait to get rid of them. As of this writing [mid-2010s], each of those dollars would have been worth in silver alone about thirty-five dollars.



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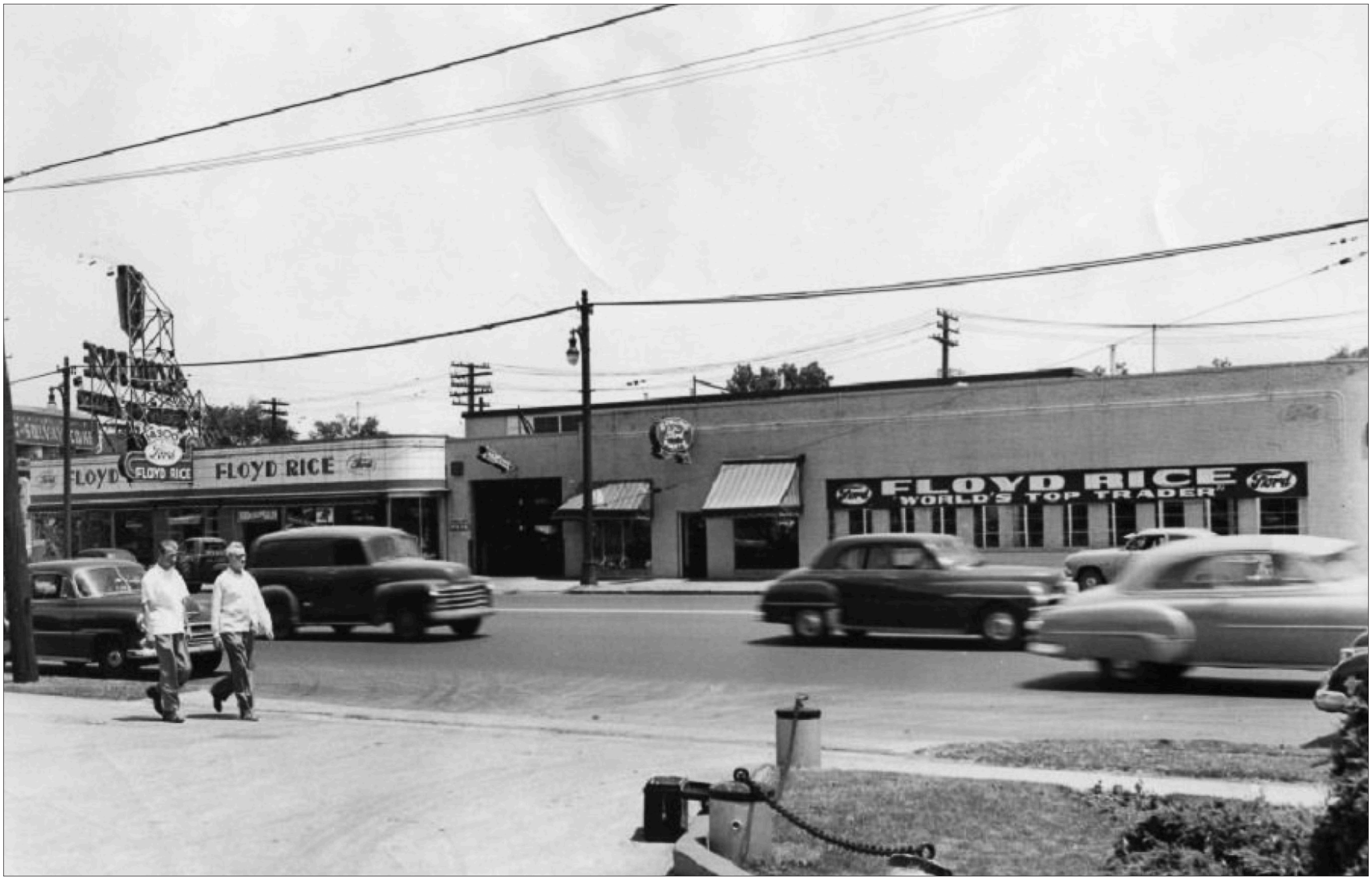
2-DR—4-DR.—VICTORIAS
AND STATION WAGONS
The greatest selection in town.
Choose your color and equipment.
$995 AND UP
With a 100% 1 full yr. guarantee
FLOYD RICE
14300 LIVERNOIS FORD DEALER
OPEN EVES. TO 10 TO 8-9810



Floyd Rice dealership on Livernois Avenue, 1950.

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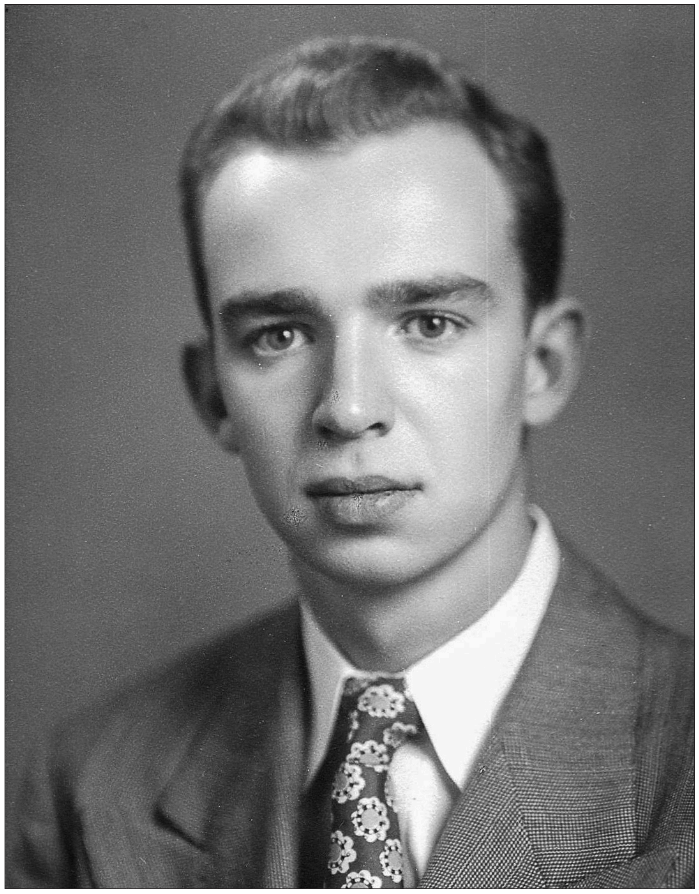
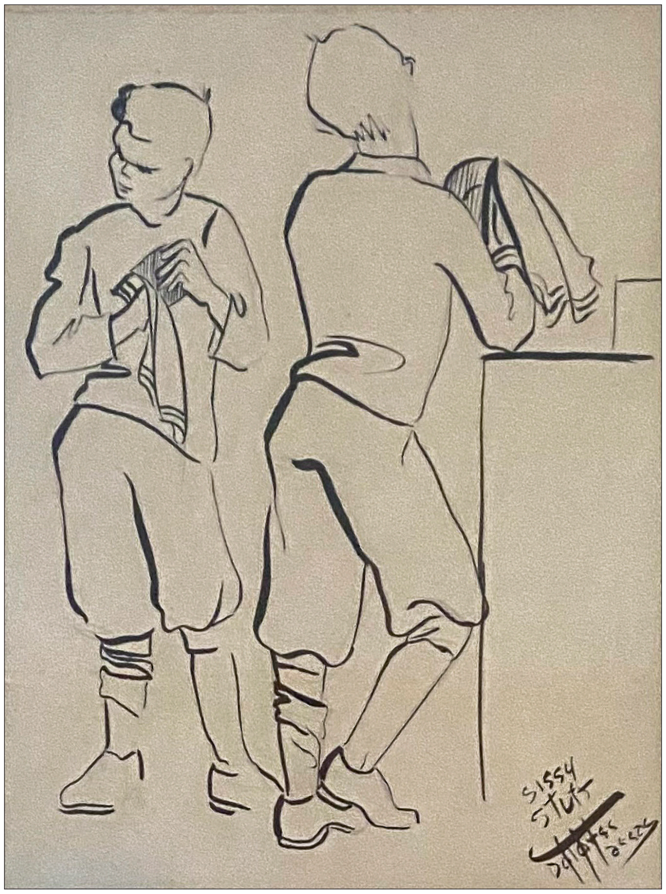
* I'm not sure whether the Floyd Rice dealership shown above is the one my father worked at, but he lived near Livernois Avenue, so it seems reasonable.

Albion was a great place for me. It was small, about 1,800 students, and the largest class was always freshman. They figured about one-third would leave after the first year. Most of the male students were pre-professional in programs that would lead to doctors, lawyers, or engineers. I was in pretty good company. I did go out for sports, but only for a short time. If I were to continue I would surely flunk out. I decided to become an economics major. My thinking was that the study of money could not hurt my situation and my future.

What about my brother? We should go back to when I am at Tappan and my brother was going to high school. He was having some difficulties in his academics and social skills. I really can't remember or really did not know what was going on, but something had to be done. Both my mom and dad went to Dean Academy in Franklin, Massachusetts, so it was decided that he would go there to finish his high school years. He seemed to do OK and came home with his degree. This situation was just the first of an indication that his dealings with life were going to be difficult. When he got home he went to Wayne University in Detroit, but didn't do well and went into the Army. When he got out he went to Western Michigan University. These years were years that I could have gotten to know him a lot better. Our ages were catching up with each other, but we never had the chance to interact on any level. As it was I didn't get to know him at all. When I was little he was not very nice to my friends or me so I really stayed away from him. He got married and lived in South Bend, Indiana. He didn't live there for very long and moved to Eugene, Oregon, and worked in the lumber business for a long time.



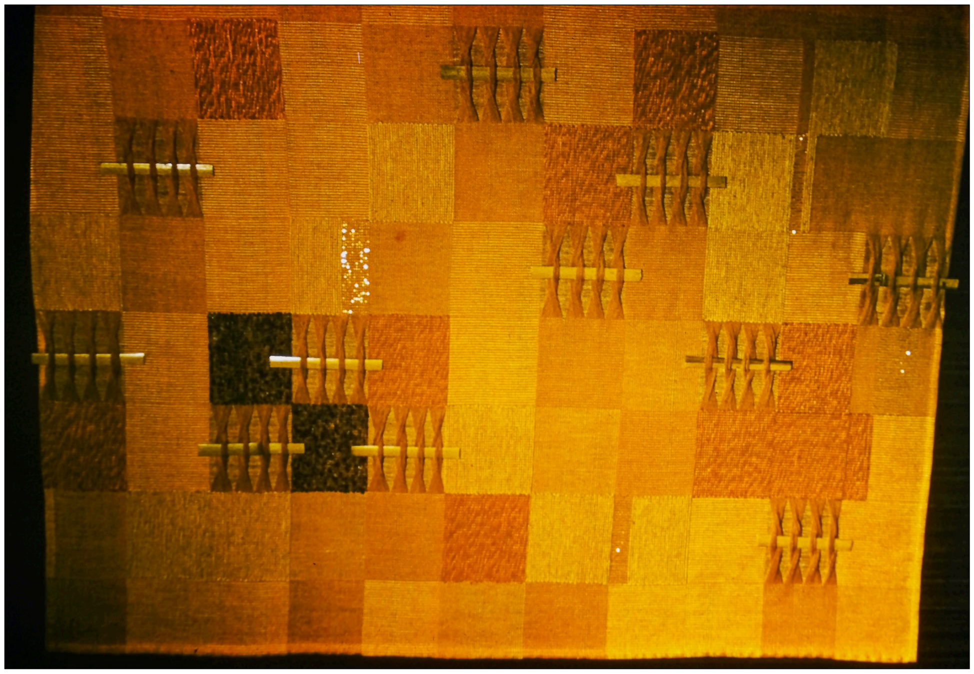
Lyman Gilman Hill, Jr., 1930–2009



Dolores [illegible]. *Sissy Stuff*. A sketch of Peter Hill, Sr., and his brother, Lyman. 1940s.

I think it should be time that I said something more about my mother. She was a very talented person. She got interested in weaving. Our sunroom, as it was called, had two large looms that took up all the space. It was a very big job to just set up the looms before she could get to work. She liked to knit, sew, and any thing else related to making cloth and putting something together.

Helen Hill, 1960. Cassock.



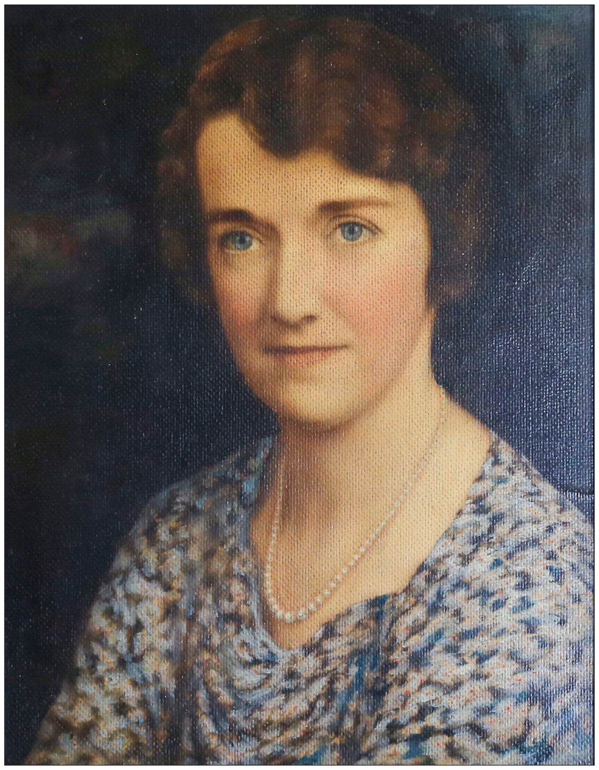
Helen Hill, 1960–61. Decorative weaving.

At this time my dad found himself not earning any money. General Motors was on strike [ending on] March 27, 1946, and the strike lasted for 113 days. This was just after the war, and there were several long strikes and hard times for people who were really not used to being out of a paying job. After the strike was over, my dad was placed on salary and that meant that he would be paid even during a strike. It was at this time that my mother decided to go to work and be the person that made the money.

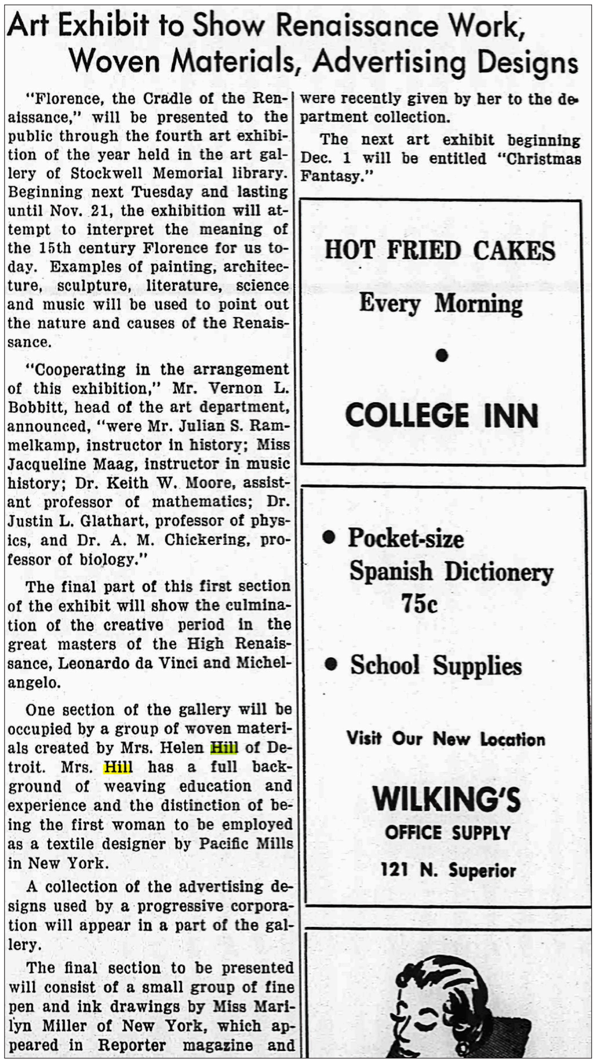
CHEVROLET
WE SAID NUTS TO G.M.'S DEAL
WILSON GETS $25,000 PER WEEK
30% — AND NO WOODEN NICKELS NO PRICE INCREASES
VETS FROM WAR I FOUGHT FROM CHATEAU-THIERRY-VERDUN ST. MIHIEL-ARGONNE FOREST TO THE RHINE UAW-CIO #93
VETS OF WARS I & II BEACHEADS-FROM ANZIO NORMANDY TO TOKYO FOR LIBERTY MUST WE CONTINUE THIS STRUGGLE FOR DECENT LIVING WAGES ?
VETS FROM BOTH MAJOR WARS BANDED TOGETHER TO WIN AGAIN LOCAL 93
VETRANS OF WAR-2- ARMY NAVY MARINES COASTGUARD AIRCORPS WE HAD A TOUGH FIGHT MUST WE FIGHT AGAIN?
6 MILLION STRONG CAN'T BE WRONG CIO

Picketers during the 1945–46 General Motors strike

She got a job at Sears in the Notions Department. I never could really understand what notions meant, but anyway it was where you would buy cloth, yarn, etc. She was great at knitting. I got socks and sweaters when they were needed. She would help sell at Sears by being able to show people how to do most anything related to the items they purchased. This was the start of a long teaching career. After Sears she worked for the Detroit Public Schools Adult Programs. She was very fond of fashion. She would make her own hats. This was a time when both men and women wore hats and it was big business. She wasn't in the business. She just loved to make things and use her skills toward a complete project. She would study each area of the craft she was interested in so that her work would be professional. At the loom she would conceive the cloth and make a garment. One project was not really a great success and that was one of bath towels. They looked great but wouldn't dry you off. It was a little disappointing for her because it took a long time to set up the loom. This is only one thing that she tried to do that did not work out. Most of the time she had great success.



Portrait of Helen Johnson Hill, the artist's mother.



Art Exhibit to Show Renaissance Work, Woven Materials, Advertising Designs

"Florence, the Cradle of the Renaissance," will be presented to the public through the fourth art exhibition of the year held in the art gallery of Stockwell Memorial library. Beginning next Tuesday and lasting until Nov. 21, the exhibition will attempt to interpret the meaning of the 15th century Florence for us today. Examples of painting, architecture, sculpture, literature, science and music will be used to point out the nature and causes of the Renaissance.

"Cooperating in the arrangement of this exhibition," Mr. Vernon L. Bobbitt, head of the art department, announced, "were Mr. Julian S. Rammelkamp, instructor in history; Miss Jacqueline Maag, instructor in music history; Dr. Keith W. Moore, assistant professor of mathematics; Dr. Justin L. Glathart, professor of physics, and Dr. A. M. Chickering, professor of biology."

The final part of this first section of the exhibit will show the culmination of the creative period in the great masters of the High Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo.

One section of the gallery will be occupied by a group of woven materials created by Mrs. Helen Hill of Detroit. Mrs. Hill has a full background of weaving education and experience and the distinction of being the first woman to be employed as a textile designer by Pacific Mills in New York.

A collection of the advertising designs used by a progressive corporation will appear in a part of the gallery.

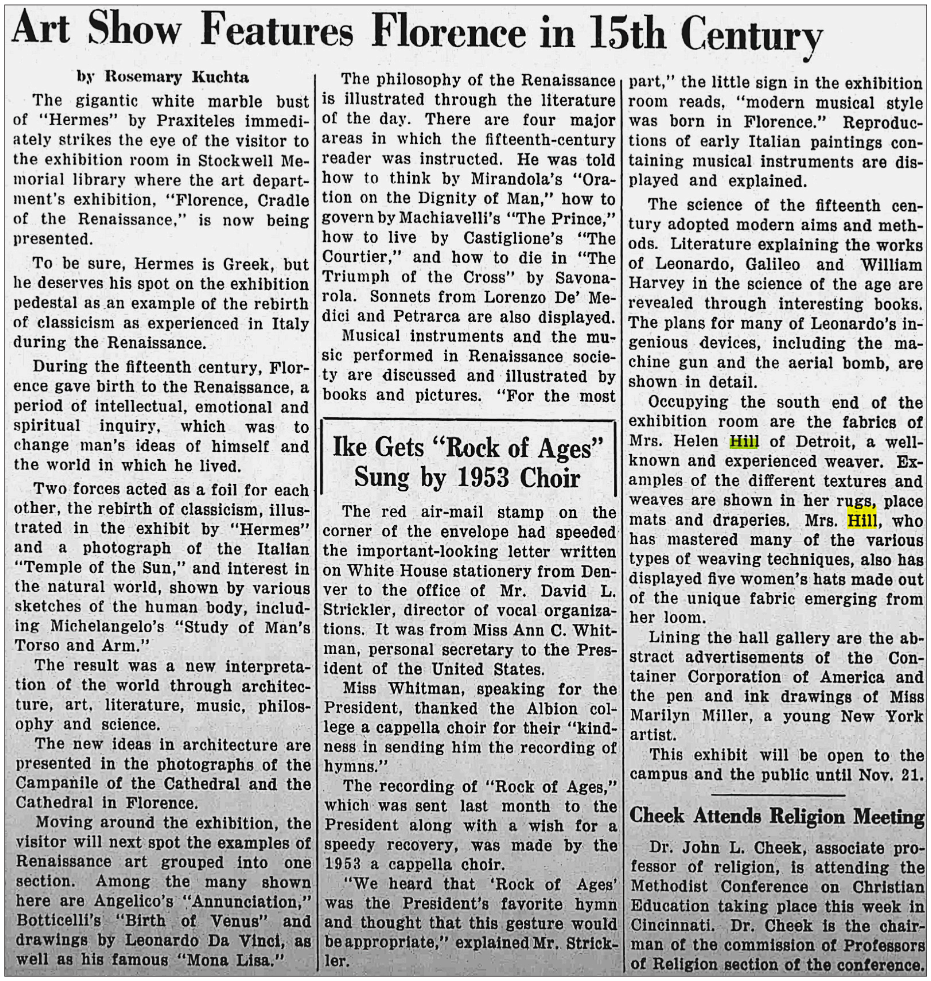
The final section to be presented will consist of a small group of fine pen and ink drawings by Miss Marilyn Miller of New York, which appeared in Reporter magazine and were recently given by her to the department collection.

The next art exhibit beginning Dec. 1 will be entitled "Christmas Fantasy."

HOT FRIED CAKES
Every Morning
•
COLLEGE INN

• Pocket-size Spanish Dictionery 75c
• School Supplies
Visit Our New Location
WILKING'S
OFFICE SUPPLY
121 N. Superior

Albion Pleiad, November 4, 1955



Art Show Features Florence in 15th Century

by Rosemary Kuchta

The gigantic white marble bust of "Hermes" by Praxiteles immediately strikes the eye of the visitor to the exhibition room in Stockwell Memorial library where the art department's exhibition, "Florence, Cradle of the Renaissance," is now being presented.

To be sure, Hermes is Greek, but he deserves his spot on the exhibition pedestal as an example of the rebirth of classicism as experienced in Italy during the Renaissance.

During the fifteenth century, Florence gave birth to the Renaissance, a period of intellectual, emotional and spiritual inquiry, which was to change man's ideas of himself and the world in which he lived.

Two forces acted as a foil for each other, the rebirth of classicism, illustrated in the exhibit by "Hermes" and a photograph of the Italian "Temple of the Sun," and interest in the natural world, shown by various sketches of the human body, including Michelangelo's "Study of Man's Torso and Arm."

The result was a new interpretation of the world through architecture, art, literature, music, philosophy and science.

The new ideas in architecture are presented in the photographs of the Campanile of the Cathedral and the Cathedral in Florence.

Moving around the exhibition, the visitor will next spot the examples of Renaissance art grouped into one section. Among the many shown here are Angelico's "Annunciation," Botticelli's "Birth of Venus" and drawings by Leonardo Da Vinci, as well as his famous "Mona Lisa."

The philosophy of the Renaissance is illustrated through the literature of the day. There are four major areas in which the fifteenth-century reader was instructed. He was told how to think by Mirandola's "Oration on the Dignity of Man," how to govern by Machiavelli's "The Prince," how to live by Castiglione's "The Courtier," and how to die in "The Triumph of the Cross" by Savonarola. Sonnets from Lorenzo De' Medici and Petrarca are also displayed.

Musical instruments and the music performed in Renaissance society are discussed and illustrated by books and pictures. "For the most part," the little sign in the exhibition room reads, "modern musical style was born in Florence." Reproductions of early Italian paintings containing musical instruments are displayed and explained.

The science of the fifteenth century adopted modern aims and methods. Literature explaining the works of Leonardo, Galileo and William Harvey in the science of the age are revealed through interesting books. The plans for many of Leonardo's ingenious devices, including the machine gun and the aerial bomb, are shown in detail.

Occupying the south end of the exhibition room are the fabrics of Mrs. Helen Hill of Detroit, a well-known and experienced weaver. Examples of the different textures and weaves are shown in her rugs, place mats and draperies. Mrs. Hill, who has mastered many of the various types of weaving techniques, also has displayed five women's hats made out of the unique fabric emerging from her loom.

Lining the hall gallery are the abstract advertisements of the Container Corporation of America and the pen and ink drawings of Miss Marilyn Miller, a young New York artist.

This exhibit will be open to the campus and the public until Nov. 21.

Ike Gets "Rock of Ages" Sung by 1953 Choir

The red air-mail stamp on the corner of the envelope had speeded the important-looking letter written on White House stationery from Denver to the office of Mr. David L. Strickler, director of vocal organizations. It was from Miss Ann C. Whitman, personal secretary to the President of the United States.

Miss Whitman, speaking for the President, thanked the Albion college a cappella choir for their "kindness in sending him the recording of hymns."

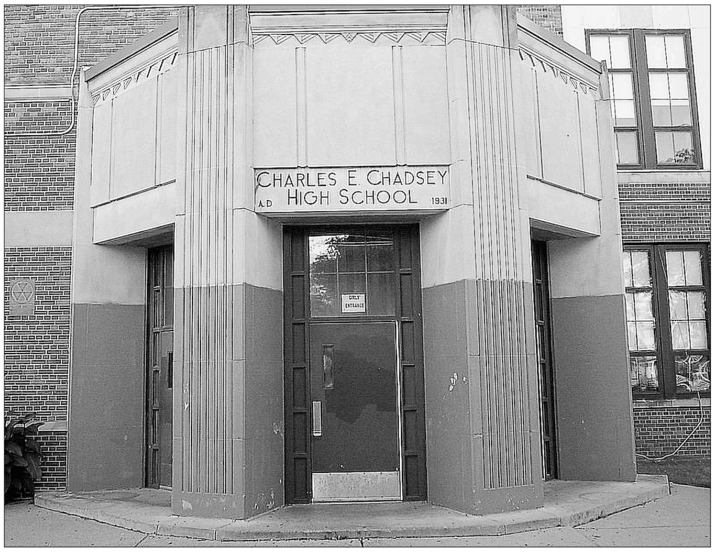
The recording of "Rock of Ages," which was sent last month to the President along with a wish for a speedy recovery, was made by the 1953 a cappella choir.

"We heard that 'Rock of Ages' was the President's favorite hymn and thought that this gesture would be appropriate," explained Mr. Strickler.

Cheek Attends Religion Meeting

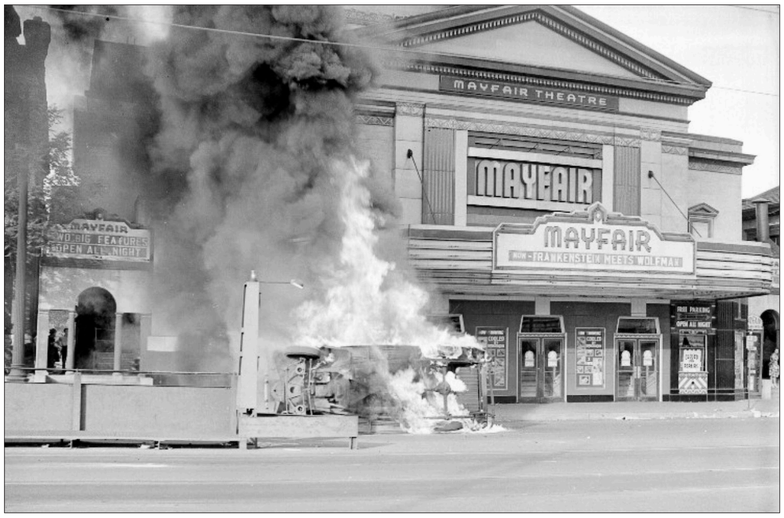
Dr. John L. Cheek, associate professor of religion, is attending the Methodist Conference on Christian Education taking place this week in Cincinnati. Dr. Cheek is the chairman of the commission of Professors of Religion section of the conference.

Albion Pleiad, November 11, 1955



When she taught at night it was a little worrying because things were getting bad in Detroit. I will talk about problems and some events that begin to show Detroit on the decline. A little white lady in certain parts of town was not safe. At Chadsey High it was that part of town. Most of her students were black women. At the end of class a group of very large ladies would make sure that my Mom got to her car and away without harm. My Mom had lots of friends and did a lot nice things for a great many people.

Detroit was changing fast. When I was little it was very safe as I have said earlier. On June 20, 1943, Detroit had a race riot. Twenty-nine people were killed and hundreds more badly injured. The riot would stay largely on the other side of Grand Boulevard, so it didn't reach where I lived. I would be ten at the time and do remember what was going on, but I was not afraid. Many of the schools were closed and people didn't go to work. I don't remember missing school or my dad not going to work. The next month New York City had a riot with five killed and four hundred and ten injured. There hadn't been anything like this since the World War I. After this event there would be nothing like it until 1967, and I will speak about this later.



Rioting on Woodward Avenue near Stimpson Street, June 21, 1943

Albion College in 2020

Now I must jump ahead to Albion College. I took the normal courses for my degree, and was lucky that I didn't have to take any foreign language. Four years of Latin in high school made it possible for me to meet the requirement. In my junior year I decided to get another major because I had all the economics that I wanted to take and with the hours free of language I could do it without any difficulty. What to take that might work well with economics? Of course it had to be Art.*

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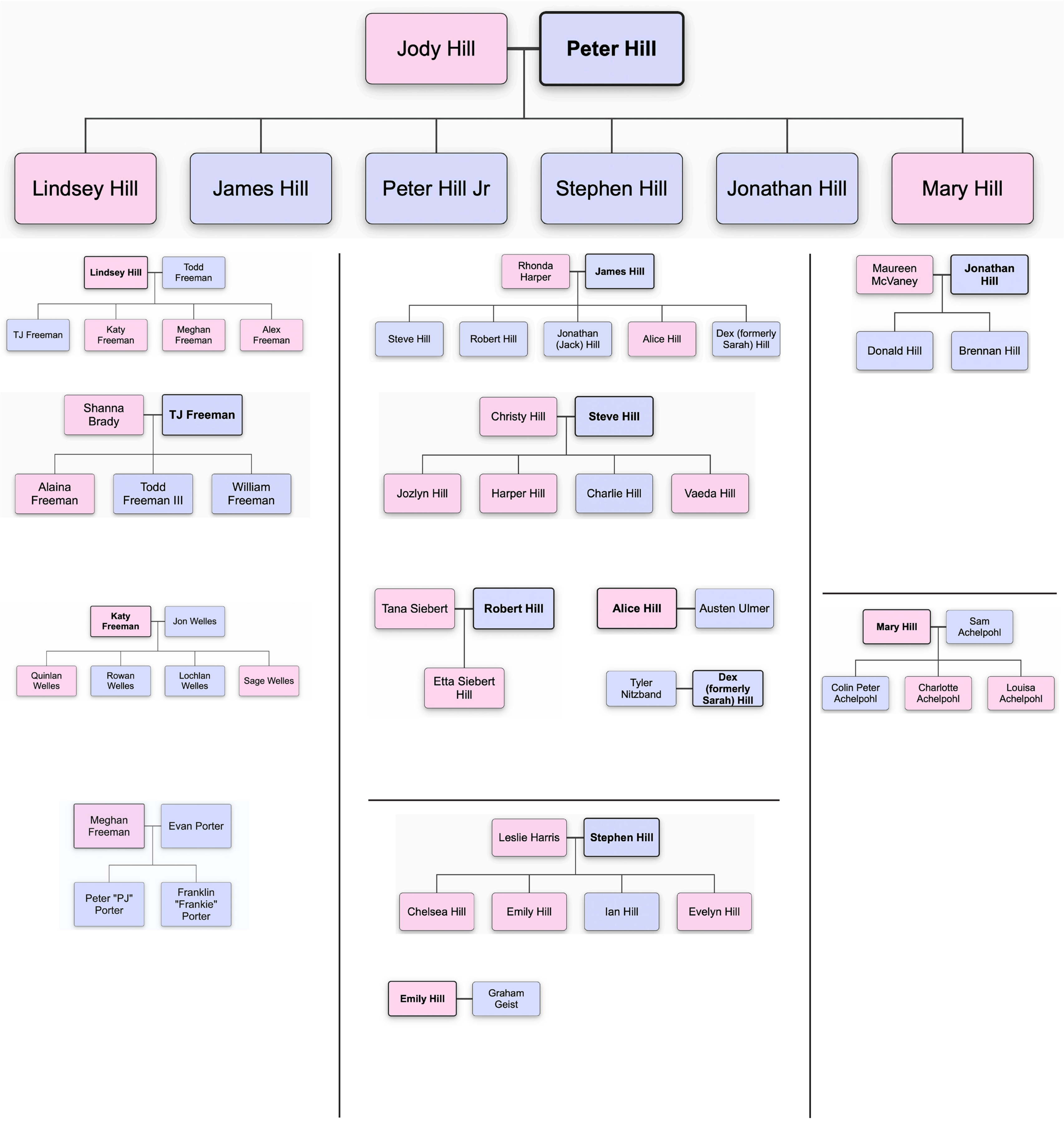
* And here he stopped writing his memoirs. If you want to know what happened next, go back to the start of this book.

Peter and Jody Hill's Descendants as of Print Date

These trees are intended to help determine whether this book's owner is a descendant of Peter Hill. As time passes the record will get murky, so I encourage readers to *leave clear notes in the book* to clarify ancestry.


Jody Hill
Peter Hill
Lindsey Hill
James Hill
Peter Hill Jr
Stephen Hill
Jonathan Hill
Mary Hill
Lindsey Hill
Todd Freeman
TJ Freeman
Katy Freeman
Meghan Freeman
Alex Freeman
Shanna Brady
TJ Freeman
Alaina Freeman
Todd Freeman III
William Freeman
Katy Freeman
Jon Welles
Quinlan Welles
Rowan Welles
Lochlan Welles
Sage Welles
Meghan Freeman
Evan Porter
Peter "PJ" Porter
Franklin "Frankie" Porter
Rhonda Harper
James Hill
Steve Hill
Robert Hill
Jonathan (Jack) Hill
Alice Hill
Dex (formerly Sarah) Hill
Christy Hill
Steve Hill
Jozlyn Hill
Harper Hill
Charlie Hill
Vaeda Hill
Tana Siebert
Robert Hill
Etta Siebert Hill
Alice Hill
Austen Ulmer
Tyler Nitzband
Dex (formerly Sarah) Hill
Leslie Harris
Stephen Hill
Chelsea Hill
Emily Hill
Ian Hill
Evelyn Hill
Emily Hill
Graham Geist
Maureen McVaney
Jonathan Hill
Donald Hill
Brennan Hill
Mary Hill
Sam Achelpohl
Colin Peter Achelpohl
Charlotte Achelpohl
Louisa Achelpohl